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MATE OF THE JESSICA

A Story of the South Pacific

BY

F. FRANKFORT MOORE,

AUTHOR OF "WHERE THE RAIL RUNS NOW," "TOLD BY THE SEA," "SOJOURNERS TOGETHER," "FLYING FROM A SHADOW," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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MATE OF THE "JESSICA."

A Story of the South Pacific.

CHAPTER I.

It was a day in the early part of December, and the sun was burning overhead out of a cloudless sky, that would have been found to be blue, if anyone had been bold enough to look up to what was such an intolerable glare of brilliancy. It was a day in the early part of December, and the dust was lying idle upon the streets, for it was too warm for even the dust to bestir itself. The deep awnings were hanging in

front of the shops, but in spite of the protection they afforded, the confectioners were beginning to be anxious on account of their acid drops, which were giving evidence of a tendency to melt into inseparable companionship; and as for the jujubes and gelatine lozenges, the sellers of these luxuries saw in a moment that the period when they would have to be disposed of by the pint, instead of by the pound, was merely a matter of hours. It was a day when everything seemed becoming liquid. It was pretty freely circulated that a rather stout gentleman, who had been noticed walking up a hill in the early part of the day, had been seen coming down about noon in the form of a gentle rivulet; but this news was not generally believed, and everyone seemed much too languid to make any attempt to discover the origin of the rumour, which to the thoughtful did not

seem so utterly extravagant as to be unworthy of the least credence. All this had taken place, as has already been said, on a day in the early part of December, and yet no one seemed to be surprised; everyone seemed to regard the heat as quite seasonable.

It is rather an overturning of all our ideas of December weather to hear of this, and most people will ask by what magic the heat of June was transferred to December. It certainly could only have been brought about by magic, the ancients would have thought—the ancients whose world was a northern one—who had never known of the existence of those strange great islands of the southern oceans where the course of the northern seasons is reversed, Midsummer's Day being the twenty-first of December.

It is not difficult for us to understand

how all this takes place without the aid of any magic but the magic of distance; and so, when it is told that it was the people of Melbourne the hot December day just described was making so uncomfortable, no one will fancy that the writer has been reading the "Arabian Nights" too carefully.

It was, indeed, upon the streets of Melbourne, that chief of Australian cities, that the grey dust was lying; and it was over the shop-fronts of Melbourne that the canvas blinds were hanging in a vain attempt to preserve the goods in the windows from the scorching sunshine. The appearance of the streets in this place would not strike a stranger as being very different from that of a town in England; and anyone who should come here in the expectation of finding everything as different as the climate in the corresponding months of the year would be very much disappointed. The

streets are, to be sure, a good deal wider than most of those in our old-fashioned northern towns, for when Melbourne was built there was plenty of room to spare, though it is not so now. There is nothing very remarkable about the shops; and except that most of the people are sensible enough to go about on the hot days in purely white linen coats and trousers, there is really nothing to be seen that would seem queer to a stranger.

But upon this hot day when our story opens something occurred that would have seemed very queer indeed to anyone not accustomed to the colony. At the top of one of the broad streets there was heard the sound of a horn; the instrument has been called a barbarous horn, and certainly anyone who had heard this particular horn played as it was would have understood the justice of its being so termed. There

was a barbarous horn, a still more barbarous drum, and a pair of cymbals that combined in themselves all the barbarity of the horn and drum. Now, though each of these instruments is useful in its own way in a full orchestra, and is capable of contributing, when subject to certain restrictions, to a harmonious and satisfactory result; yet it can be understood, without much argument it is to be hoped, that a band composed only of the three would not be musically effective, even though its strains might possibly be thought to suggest a few expressive bits of Wagner.

It was evident, too, that the music was not stationary; it seemed to be coming closer, and in a few minutes its origin was seen. The dust of the street was stirred from its repose, and sent upwards in immense clouds, as there drove up a large colonial spring waggon like a brake, with

six horses decorated with ribbons of various colours. The occupants of the vehicle were seven in number, all men, and it certainly would have struck a passer-by that there was a good deal that seemed remarkable about those men. They were dressed in the most curious fashion imaginable, but they were evidently very independent in their tastes, for no two were decorated alike. One had on a light coat of the broadest check possible—a game of chess could have easily been played upon his sleeve. Another had as much shirt-front displayed as would have made a flying jib for a ten ton yacht; a third did not believe in such a show, but had an evident affection for scarlet as a colour, for he wore beneath a bright yellow waistcoat an immense scarf of the most powerful red; a fourth had a white suit, surmounted by a gigantic chimney-pot black hat, to make a startling contrast,

which it certainly did. The others were equally remarkable as to their attire, and not one was commonplace enough to pass unnoticed in any crowd of civilized people. The only article the seven had in common was gloves, each wearing an immense pair of primrose kids.

Three of the men were engaged at the instruments of torture, two were waving flags, two were driving, and all were shouting. The flag wavers were the only pair who were working harmoniously, the bandsmen were certainly not; and, owing to the want of agreement on the part of the drivers, the leading horses were now and again brought round with their faces looking into the faces of those behind them. Surely a more remarkable equipage was never seen either in the northern or southern hemisphere.

In one matter, however, the most sin-

gular union existed among the seven heroes of the waggon—they had made up their minds to stop at the first drinking saloon in the street; and so soon as it was caught sight of, the bandsmen ceased their labour, the flagmen did so as well, and all united to pull the rein next the side of the saloon. The result was, that the horses were made to perform a circuit on the pavement, and the machine was at the point of overturning. A dozen willing hands were, however, brought to bear upon the mystified animals — for there are always loafers enough in a Melbourne street to assist the drivers of any vehicle that stops at a drinking saloon—and, throwing a handful of silver amongst the crowd, the curiously-dressed gentlemen leaped from the waggon at various parts of its sides, more than one of the glazed kid boots that they wore bursting with

the action, and nearly all the primrose gloves being ripped open. With a choice and novel selection of oaths, the seven went into the saloon, and the people passing by laughed and shook their heads.

But among those who watched the strange proceeding was a young man dressed in a style very different to those he had seen upon the waggon. He had on a sailor's shabby jacket and cap, and canvas shoes. He was a tall, well-built young fellow, and his face was as bronzed as those inside the saloon.

He seemed somewhat mystified by what he had seen, so he asked another man who stood near if a circus troupe had arrived in the city.

The other laughed.

"A circus troupe? No; I should rather think not. Guess you're a stranger here, young 'un, or you'd ha' known be-

fore now what such like fools as these are."

"Yes, I'm a stranger—just ashore for the first time yesterday," said the young man.

"Wasn't far wrong, was I? Well, when you go home again, and anybody asks you if you've ever seen a gang of gold-miners out on a spree, you say you did."

"Gold-miners? Then those are gold-miners?"

"You just call them gold-miners; and when you do so to anybody that knows this place, you needn't be at the trouble of calling them blackguards, ruffians, and bullies. Ay, when they've had a run of luck they come down to the city to get rid of the responsibility of keeping a few pounds' weight of dust apiece, and those that go back alive—but it's dry work

talking on a day like this. Come round, and I'll buy you a drink, as they say at 'Frisco."

"I've no money to return the compliment," said the young man, shaking his head. "Thank you for your information, however." And he nodded and walked on, leaving the other to growl out something about learning better manners in the colony.

"It hardly seems the place one would go to in order to write a book on etiquette," said the young man to himself, as he went on; and then, after a few minutes, he muttered—"Everything seems against me. I had set my mind upon the gold-fields; but now that idea is overturned in a moment. I have not fallen so low as that yet."

He walked slowly on in the shade, and in a short time he was passed again by

the waggon and its occupants, who were infinitely louder than before. They had not, however, proceeded further than the end of the long street, when again the same process of pulling up at a saloon was noticed, and the same easy dismounting took place. There was, beyond doubt, a conscientious objection existing in the minds of the drivers to pass any place of this nature. By the time the young man, who was a stranger to the colony, had reached where the waggon was standing, the miners were coming out again, and it could be seen, without much difficulty, that their spirits were by no means diminished by this last visit. They were inclined to be on friendly terms with the crowd that had gathered around the door, and as, of course, all the respectable people had crossed the street, the crowd was composed only of men who were but

too happy to allow themselves to be sworn at, if there was any prospect of getting a drink.

With some trouble four of the men managed to mount the waggon; but the other three did not seem disposed to hasten away. One of them was encouraged by the mob to sing, and he cheerfully complied, amid much applause; another returned to the bar, and the third was too tipsy to mount the waggon; so he contented himself with swearing at his companions, at the crowd, and at the world generally. This, of course, was a cheerful occupation; but in a few minutes it became monotonous, as no one paid any attention to him; so he cast his eyes vacantly about him, while the crowd cheered the vocalist.

Now, exactly opposite the waggon there was a large haberdasher's store, and at the entrance stood motionless a splendidly

dressed figure of a lady. The face was evidently looking across the street, nor did it turn aside for an instant. The tipsy man gazed across, and the reality of the situation seemed to flash over him. That spendidly dressed lady was transfixed with the attractiveness of his presence; his broad-checked coat, silk hat, and primrose kid gloves had won her affections. With a shout of triumph he rushed across the street and clasped the figure in his arms, amid the roars of laughter of all who saw the action, for the figure was one of those artificial bodies for the display of the newest fashions at the haberdashers' doors.

The man was too drunk to understand anything but that he had somehow made a fool of himself, and that he was being laughed at. He let go the figure and staggered back to the street, demanding, with an oath, what there was to laugh at.

Receiving no satisfactory reply, he turned again to where he had left his fair one; but at the same instant he caught sight of a young lady who had just left the shop, and was walking hastily away. Thinking that this was the same who had not shrunk from his embraces a minute before, he cried to her to come back, at the same time rushing blindly to catch her again. In terror the young lady shrieked out. But the tipsy fool laughed wildly, and had just caught her arm when the collar of that grand checked coat of his was grasped from behind by no weak arm, and he was sent sprawling in the dust at the side of the footway.

Half sobered by the shock he sprang to his feet, and seeing his assailant, who was the young man in the sailor's jacket, standing flushed and with clenched fists and teeth a few yards off, with a yell of rage

he drew a long new knife from his belt and made a blind rush at the young man, who, however, did not appear inclined to be martyred on the spot, for he retreated a few steps, and with a skilful movement contrived to put the well-dressed stock figure in his place. In an instant the sharp knife was plunged up to the hilt in the breast of the sham lady, and man and figure went down together in a heap, while the pavement was covered with bran and the spectators were convulsed—all except the haberdasher, who declared he would have satisfaction for the outrage that had been committed upon the innocent member of his family of stock figures.

But before the miner had recovered himself a couple of policemen had whispered something to the young man, and he suffered himself to be led off hastily into a side street. Meantime the crowd at

the other side of the street, hearing the laughter, and seeing the gleam of the knife blade, rushed across just as the man had managed to get himself into a sitting posture on the ground. There he sat stunned for a minute, looking at the prostrate body beside him in terror.

"Mother o' Moses! what have I done at all at all?" he cried, with a rich Irish brogue. "The poor innoshent girl I've kilt as dead as a door-nail. Och, it's hanged I'll be now in arnest! Why don't some of ye run for the crowner or the Lord Liftinant, and get me dacently hung off hand, and without any fuss? Och, me honey, rise and tell us yer not kilt all out! Ah, she's stiff already—stiffer than any corpse I ever filt! Oh, murther and turf, what'll come to us all this blissed day?"

"Come up, ye fool," cried one of his companions, while the crowd roared with

laughter. "Come up, and don't make a bigger fool of yourself than you are already."

"Och, ye brutes—ye bastes—to be yellin' and laughin' while the poor innoshent colleen lies there stiff and cold!" cried the Irishman, trying to rise.

"He won't go out of this until I am paid five pounds for the damage done," cried the haberdasher. "I hope I'll receive your protection, gentlemen."

"What's five or ten pounds to us?" said one of the miners, pulling out a handful of shining sovereigns fresh from the Sydney mint. "Better say ten pounds and call it square, governor. Here's the chink, and five sovs more to give them milk-faced boys of yours a drink." And he put the handful of gold into the shopkeeper's pocket.

The Irishman was upon his feet by this

time. He observed the transaction with amazement.

"Tare an' ages, what a counthry of savages it is!" he cried. "A man lets one of his family be murthered and only charges five pounds for it. Oh, ye old scoundrel, to see yer own flesh and blood like this! Ye ought to see the murtherer of yer offspring hung by the neck till he was dead. Give him another five yellow boys, Bill; its chape at the price, and I'll pay for a headstone meself. Oh, ye haythen, ye haythen!"

Amid the laughter of the crowd the self-accused murderer was borne off to his companions on the waggon, and with the cheers of the people mingling with the beating of the drum, the braying of the horn, and the clanging of the cymbals, the six horses were turned down the street at full gallop. The crowd separated to drink

the proceeds of the miners' largesse ; the cloud of dust settled down once more upon the hot street, and the sun glared upon the flags and white awnings of the shops as before.

CHAPTER II.

THE young man who had, at a risk to himself the extent of which he did not at the moment think about, protected the lady from the insult of the intoxicated miner, was in the friendly custody of two policemen in a small side street, while the tragedy at the door of the haberdasher's was concluding. The policemen had whispered a few smooth words of advice to him when the man had fallen over the murdered stock, and he had been wise enough to check the anger he felt at the drunken assault that had been committed. So when the fellows had come across from the waggon they knew nothing about their companion being thrown to the ground by the lady's

protector; if they had known of it, and the young sailor had been on the spot, it would probably have fared badly with him. He was, however, out of sight of the crowd in another street.

"You seem to be a stranger in the colony, young fellow," said one of the policemen, "or you wouldn't have been such a fool as to interfere with a tipsy miner out on a spree."

"Yes, I am a stranger," said the young man. "But I cannot see how any acquaintance with the colony would make me act differently to the way I did."

"Ay, so you think now, my lad, and so does everyone for the first month after arriving; but, bless you, people soon come to think different," said the other, laughing.

"Then I hope I may not remain for a month in the colony," said the young man bitterly. "A man must be sunk very low

when he will stand by as the people in that crowd did, and see a drunken scoundrel lay his unclean hand upon a lady. I should not be sorry to know that I had brained the fellow upon the pavement."

The policeman laughed. "I should be sorry," he replied; "I should in that case have thought it my duty to arrest you."

"Should you?" said the sailor. "And yet you didn't think it your duty to arrest that tipsy scoundrel who was the cause of the row."

"Ah, you *are* a stranger, my lad," replied the policeman, pityingly. "The idea of arresting a miner within the first half-hour of his spree! Why, the whole place would be in an uproar. The trade of Melbourne would be ruined if that principle were to be carried out. Just think, that fellow has spent, say, fifty pounds for the good of trade this morning already; he has most likely

got about a hundred sovereigns in his pocket still, which he will spend or throw away before he gets into a regular row at night, and is either stabbed in a saloon, or locked up in the cells. If I had arrested him just here, we should probably have been set upon by his companions, and have got a bruising, so no good would have been gained. But even take the case that we had arrested him, and got him safely to the cells, he would not have an opportunity of spending those hundred sovereigns that he has now in his pocket, and so much trade would be lost to the town. Now you see the reason of all."

"Reason!" said the sailor. "This is the queerest idea of reason I ever heard. Never mind, I am young in the colony."

While they were talking together the tragedy in the other street was coming to a conclusion, and in a few minutes the waggon

was seen passing the end of the street where they stood.

"Now, you see, all is over quietly," said the policeman. "And the haberdasher has, you may be sure, contrived to make an honest penny for himself by the transaction. It was a sensible thing for you to do, to take my advice and come out of the crowd with us. Good-day to you, my lad, and try and get into the way of the colony as soon as you can."

"I'll try and get out of the way of the colony as soon as possible," he replied, walking off.

He had become altogether calm by this time, and his thoughts, that had been diverted from his own affairs for a while, returned to their former track. Here he was, acquainted with no one in the place, and with only half a sovereign in his pocket.

It would be quite possible to draw a picture of a man in a more fortunate position than that of Charlie Barton—for this was his name—upon this hot December day in the streets of Melbourne.

He was about twenty-four years of age, and he was tall and strongly built. His face was very much bronzed by the sun and exposure to rough weather, but this only served to make the blue of his eyes look the softer. His eyes were, in fact, so soft as to seem delicate, and their effect was to neutralize the idea of strength suggested by the rest of his appearance. He had more than once been taken for a weak man —a man with no strength of mind. Perhaps, too, he had during his life done enough to justify people in pronouncing him to be of a weak nature.

For instance, he surely showed that he possessed very little strength of character

when, eight years ago, he had thrown over such excellent prospects as he had all on account of a dispute with his father. Mr. Barton, Senr., was a solicitor in a country town in the West of England, and as his wife was dead, and Charlie his only child, there could be no doubt that, if Charlie behaved discreetly, he should succeed to the profession, in the exercise of which his father had gained a very considerable fortune. All this was explained to Master Charlie when it was time for him to think of a profession, but, to the amazement of his advisers and to the disgust of his father, he had declined to become an attorney's clerk, and had expressed a desire to enter the army or the navy.

"I would rather that you entered a beershop as apprentice," cried his father. "There would be some chance of your making a fortune in a beershop, but what

can the army or navy lead to but beggary."

"But I don't want a fortune," Charlie had said. "I don't think that money is everything. I want to see the world."

"Stuff and nonsense, sir," his father had replied. "I have never seen the world, as you call it, and I don't think I'm anything the worse for it. I'm in a respectable position, with one of the best practices in the county. One part of the world is pretty much the same as another. When you've been and seen a place you come away, and you've gained nothing — you have nothing to show for your trouble."

In spite of the force of this reasoning, however, Charlie had kept to his own opinion: he would see the world, and he had continued to give his attention to cartridge cases instead of law cases, and lifeboat davits took the place of affidavits

in his mind. All this good Mr. Barton saw, with dismay first and with anger afterwards, and a certain confidential clerk, whom he had as his right hand in his business, took care to point out to him everything that Charlie was doing, and to urge him, in that quiet underhand way which is far more forcible than outspoken language, to insist on the boy's choosing between his father's wishes and his own, as speedily as possible. The poor man was thus induced to bring matters to a climax.

He summoned his son into his presence one evening and put the question to him in a straightforward way: was he prepared to choose between the honourable career of a country solicitor with a good business ready-made for him, and the beggarly profession of arms, whether weapons or yard-arms. Charlie did not take long to con-

sider; he repeated what he had said long before: he wanted to see the world.

"Then go and see your world," cried his father, passionately, "but when you have seen it, don't think that you may come back here to see me and to live upon my money. If you go now you must not think that you have a father. I will never do anything for you, though I should hear that you are starving."

Poor Charlie was young and thoughtless. He had missed the care and teaching of a mother. His ideas of a son's duties were very vague. He defied his father and lived to pay a heavy penalty.

Their interview had taken place in the evening, and in the night Charlie packed up all the things that he could call his own, with the exception of a choice edition of the poetical works of one Virgil; and having counted out his money, which

amounted to something over four pounds and less than five, he started upon that haziest of all enterprises — seeing the world.

This had happened eight years previous to his first appearance in this story, and to recount all that he had passed through during that space of time would require a book to be written considerably larger than the present chronicle is intended to be. In brief, he had become a sailor—he had gone out to see the world—he had seen already a good deal of it; and the result was that the more he saw of it the more disappointed he felt with it. After all, his father had been right; the town of Dorminster was a very fair sample of the world at large. Everything he came in contact with in the world had its counterpart in the town that he had fancied was outside the world altogether. Yes, he found this out after all.

After all! Unfortunately one does not arrive at a conclusion until this period *after all.* Charlie Barton had bitter experience of the truth of his father's advice; there was no possibility of making a fortune or rising in life at sea. He had, however, come to think of himself as a sailor, and the chance of ever being anything else had not suggested itself to him until this day, when he found himself in Melbourne with the sum of ten shillings and ninepence in his pocket.

He had arrived as second mate of a barque from Sunderland. An old vessel—ill-built, ill-rigged, ill-found, and ill-manned. The skipper was an excellent specimen of the old-school bully. He certainly ruled by fear, not love. He seemed to think that it was beneath the dignity of a captain to give any order without the addition of an oath as an honorarium. And

whenever he chanced to find himself within hailing distance of one of the men, and had no order to give, sooner than be so discourteous as to pass by without speaking, he would bestow upon the man a few choice curses. He pretended, however, to be of a religious tendency for about half an hour on every Sunday morning, invariably reading prayers in the cabin, and insisting on the attendance of the officers, and as many of the men as could be spared from the never-ending task of mending the wretched old sails. The cabin skylight was just a few yards from the wheel, and the would-be devotional old skipper would lay a pocket compass beside the prayer-book from which he was reading, and every now and then he would glance from the liturgy to the needle, to see that the man at the wheel was keeping the course. If by chance there was the least divergence the

captain would pause in the middle of a prayer to launch out a volley of remonstrance at the helmsman, that produced anything but a devotional effect upon the congregation.

The result of this voyage to Charlie Barton was that he made up his mind to leave the ship on her arrival in Melbourne, and to start for the gold mines. Charlie's chronicler can by no means vindicate this free-and-easy breaking of his "articles," though he can excuse it. To desert, whether from a ship or from a regiment, is not the act of an honourable man—whatever his station. If a man consents to certain terms he is bound in truth and honesty to fulfil them, and the very word deserter carries a certain baseness on its face. Only the last extremity of tyranny and bad usage can make deserting pardonable. In Charlie's case he had been badly

used. In addition, he had already shown a wilful temper, and it would appear the insubordination had not yet been knocked out of him. Perhaps, though he was naturally frank and manly, his standard of duty, not too high at first, had not grown any higher—rather the reverse—among the very mixed associates with whom he had been seeing the world. There is still another plea for Charlie; he was not more than a young rash fellow even then. Let it suffice that, for deserting his ship as well as for defying his father, he had to endure in the end a terrible punishment.

The idea of deserting the ship, little as can be said for it, was not confined to Charlie. It had occurred to more than one of the crew of the ship, so that she had not been longer than a day in port when she was deprived of the second mate, and half a dozen of the men. The men had

all gone off to the mines, and Charlie had intended following their example when the vessel should have left the port again—for he had not deserted until she had got in a fresh cargo, and was at the point of returning to England. It was on the day after she had gone out of harbour that Charlie first appeared in the hot street of Melbourne, with no more than the clothes he was wearing, and with only a few shillings in his pocket.

It could, under these circumstances, scarcely be wondered at that Mr. Charles Barton, as he turned away from his friends the policemen, felt considerably dispirited.

"What a fool—what a miserable fool I have been all along!" he said out loud, as if to relieve his feelings.

"I beg your pardon," said a low voice just behind him. "I beg your pardon.

I think it is you whom I have been trying to find for some time."

The young man started and turned round. A young lady was standing behind him—the young lady whom he had protected from the rudeness of the drunken miner.

CHAPTER III.

CHARLIE had off his cap in an instant, and he felt himself blushing far more deeply than the young lady was. He had never before felt so strangely embarrassed. It was years since he had been spoken to by one who he could see was a lady, and he had almost given up hope that he would ever again hear such a voice addressing him in such tones. She was a tall and somewhat slender girl, with the richest brown hair that could be imagined, simply plaited behind her ears. Her face was full of expression, her exquisitely curved lips and large grey eyes adding immensely to the delicacy and spiritual charm of her beauty. Her face was slightly flushed as

she stood now looking up to the young man, who seemed to be in the situation of a lobster subjected to a process of rapid boiling.

He had called himself a fool, and then her words came:—"I have been trying to find you for some time."

"Trying to find me?" he said, so soon as he had recovered from his embarrassment.

"Yes, I think so," she answered, looking up to him in a way that made his face of a temperature far beyond that of boiling point. "It is you I have to thank for saving me from the insult of that dreadful man, is it not?" she continued.

Charlie looked at her. She seemed so beautiful that he felt he would reproach himself to the day of his death for having neglected to dash out the brains of that man.

"That is not worth talking about," he said; but becoming aware of the implied rudeness of his speech, he hastened to correct himself. "That is, of course, all I did is not worth talking about, only I was glad you were not injured."

"I would have been unless you had been so brave—so good," she said, her voice trembling with earnestness.

"It did not require much bravery to deal with a tipsy man," he answered carelessly.

"But it needed more than anyone else in the crowd possessed," she said quickly. "When I felt his hand upon me I thought I should have fainted with fear, and then I saw you behind him—I saw him fall, and rise and rush at you with his sharp knife. I felt that you could not escape—that you would be killed for saving me."

"That was not my good luck," he said,

with a smile which had something of bitterness in it. "No, I wasn't killed," he added. "I was such a fool as to listen to the advice of the policemen and to come away, leaving that ruffian alive. I will never forgive myself."

"Ah, you should not say that," she interposed. "Why, if his companions at the other side of the street had seen you do even so much as you did, they would have killed you. I knew all the risk you were running on my account, and I could not rest until I had seen you and thanked you. And yet now that I have found you I do not know how to do it, and cannot tell you what I feel."

Her voice was faltering, and her lovely eyes were becoming dim.

"Please do not try to say anything," he cried. "I do not want to be thanked, indeed."

He was moving away, for he felt his embarrassment, standing before her soft eyes, to be unendurable. But he was not allowed so to escape.

"I hope you will allow me to bring you to my father," she said, after a little pause. "You cannot go away without his seeing you. We will only be in the colony for another day, so we may never have a chance of seeing you again."

"And it will be better so," he replied, as if speaking to himself. "No, no," he added, louder, "I don't mean to be rude, but I can't go with you. I have done nothing worth either your thanks or anyone else's. I am rewarded enough in knowing that you are safe—in having seen you again, and having heard you speak for the first and last time in my life. Good-bye."

The young lady looked at him reproachfully, he thought.

"If you will not come you will at least let me——" She held out her little bare hand to him and looked into his face.

If he had seemed before like a parboiled lobster, this look more than completed the operation of boiling. He was, in fact, overdone. He looked at the white, soft hand so close to him for more than an instant before he took off his cap, as if he was about to do a sacred thing, and then grasped the hand in one of his own big paws, not giving it a chance of returning his pressure, he held it so tightly. He kept it in his possession for a few moments, then, suddenly, by an impulse not to be controlled, he put down his lips to it and kissed it gently. He gave one look at her face, then dropped her hand and strode away without a single word, leaving her standing there in the hot street alone; nor did he turn round until he was more than

a mile away in the neighbourhood of the wharves where the vessels landed. Then he stopped, took off his cap, wiped his forehead, and repeated the opening words of his soliloquy that had been interrupted by the young lady's appearance—"What a fool—a miserable fool I have been!"

On a hot day, when one has been walking out of the shade at a rapid pace, such a reflection is by no means soothing to the mind. But when the person to whom it comes recollects at the same instant that he is in a strange country, with only a few shillings in his pocket, he is not likely to feel more happy.

The fact of being poor, however, does not keep one from being hungry; nor does the consciousness of oneself being a fool tend to alleviate the pangs of thirst. This painful moral was forced upon Charlie Barton this afternoon. He was hungry,

tired, and miserable; and yet he felt that he had never spent a more delicious five minutes in all his life than when standing before that girl, listening to her gracious, grateful words, looking into her fair face and soft grey eyes. Still the only redeeming thought that he had now was that he had been strong enough to tear himself away from this five minutes of happiness.

"Thank heaven, thank heaven!" he exclaimed, grimly, "I was not such a fool as to go with her—perhaps to be offered money by her father. To have stayed with her for another instant would have made me miserable for life. As it is I am"—he paused, and then added slowly—"not miserable. No! I am happy—I have reason to be so, having saved her from the insult of that ruffian. What a poor weak thing I was not to have brained him for having laid his hand upon her even for

that instant! I will never forgive myself! How beautiful she looked—and to think of her taking my hand—this hand——." He held it up to the light, as if to see if it had suffered some great change through the contact with hers; but no, it was as brown and hard as ever, and the blue tattoo of the union-jack and the anchor, that he had skilfully done upon the surface at the angle of his thumb and forefinger, in order to beguile the tedium of a week's sickness years ago, remained as before. He seemed rather disappointed at the hardness of his hand. It truly appeared queer that his heart, which he certainly did not wear upon his sleeve, but far inside his waistcoat, should have been so impressed by no more than a look from a pair of girl's eyes, while his hand, that had actually been touched and held by hers, should remain as before.

"I will never wash it again!" he said,

thrusting it into his pocket and walking on. "I will have something at least that shall remind me of her for ever." This seemed to afford him some satisfaction, for he walked on quickly for awhile. In a few minutes, however, he stopped with a frown, and for the third time repeated the words—"I am a fool—a fool. I will wash it—I will wash from my hand and heart every trace of her—everything that may remind me of her! Why do I want to make myself more miserable still by thinking of her? Bah! I shall never see her again."

On the whole, perhaps, it was as wise for him to have come to the resolution of washing his hand. It was not beyond the bounds of possibility that before he died he might have to shake hands with some others, so that for their sake it would be necessary for him to make some little sacri-

fice of his feelings, and not refrain from the judicious use of soap and water.

Charlie Barton walked about in an aimless way for some hours, until the sun was setting, and the men who had been working at the wharves were thronging towards the city. His thoughts were various, but the conclusion of all seemed to be expressed in those words that still came back to him—"What a fool I have been."

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLIE BARTON'S reflections upon his own folly, which a philosopher would tell us could not fail to be healthy so far as his mental condition was concerned, did not tend to make him feel the less hungry. Having eaten nothing since morning, it was perhaps not wholly absurd that he should now be inclined to accept without many enquiries any invitation to dinner that might chance to be offered to him. As, however, it did not seem likely that much hospitality would be forced upon him, he went down to the Sailors' Boarding-House, where he had stayed until within a few days of the departure of the ship from which he had run away.

He knew very well that he could be recognized as the second mate of the vessel that had left, but he was also well aware that he ran no risk of being confronted by any person who could make him suffer for his desertion. The vessel was now miles away, and those of the crew who had taken French leave of the professedly pious skipper had gone to the gold mines up country more than a fortnight before, so he entered without the least doubt.

It was one of the ordinary colonial boarding-houses for sailors—a small building, but with capabilities of lodging an unlimited number of guests. Such houses are always crowded, and yet they never refuse admission to as many men as chance to turn up after the rooms have already been packed. Sometimes it happens that a few stray customers disappear after they have got their supper and a couple of hours'

sleep; and being of a most considerate nature, they avoid awaking the landlord for the sake of paying him. Upon such occasions the good landlord does not allow himself to be annoyed, but contents himself with charging all the others who have remained as much extra as compensates him for his loss, and gives him pretty good interest as well.

It was about dusk when Charlie Barton entered the large eating-room of this house, and turned aside into one of the small empty compartments, calling for some supper. While it was being brought to him he had leisure to look out and observe such of his fellow-guests as were standing around the counter of the bar enjoying a smoke and a nobbler, as they call it out there, of brandy.

There was, of course, a perfect babel of sound, for there seemed to be seamen of

all nations present. There were Genoese gesticulating, and Greeks, swarthy and silent, looking as if they had just committed murder, or were about to do so. There were prating Portuguese, and dull, stolid Northern Irish, who kept their hands in their pockets, looked sulky, and drank their liquor as if it was a matter of business, not pleasure. Every now and again the door would be swung open and a new lot would enter—Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians, with here and there a dark-skinned Lascar, and a hatchet-faced yellow Yankee smoking a long taper cigar, with the lighted end high in the air.

There had been a fight in this place every night Charlie had passed under its roof, and now he looked about him and wondered how the coming one would commence. Would it be by the American calling the Lascar a nigger? That would

be an excellent opening for a quarrel; or would it be the Portuguese who might chance to say something disagreeable on the subject of macaroni within the hearing of the Italian? No, scarcely this, Charlie thought. His further speculations were interrupted by the arrival of his supper, and as he ate it it did not even strike him how much of a hole the paying for it would make in his ten and ninepence of capital. He made a hearty meal, however, and then took out his pipe by way of making a good finish to his day of idleness. Having filled it with the remnant of his tobacco, he put up his feet on the form and was soon engaged sending large blue clouds up to the spiders on the ceiling.

It can scarcely be thought strange that in the midst of these clouds there should appear a face to him, fairer than any of those faces of saints the old painters used

to draw amidst glorified clouds. He saw ever above him the beautiful face of the girl whose hand he had kissed some hours before. He did not want to see it, but somehow he could not avoid it. It hovered there above him until—well, until he fell asleep, which happened in a very brief space of time.

He awoke with a start—quite a strange thing for him to do, considering that the talk in the place almost amounted to a roar. He awoke with a strange consciousness of hearing a voice that he knew, close to his ear.

He rubbed his eyes and stared around him in the box, but it contained only himself. He looked out and saw under the gas-lights the same figures he had observed before. He knew none of them. Could that voice have been the fancy of his dream?

It must have been so, he thought, and

he was just settling himself down for another doze when he heard the voice at his very ear. Turning round, he found out for the first time that on a level with his ear when he stooped, at the wooden side of the dining-compartment, there was a small hole about the size of a half-crown, made by the falling out of a knot in the plank of wood. When his ear was lowered opposite this hole he could hear distinctly every word that was being spoken by the person who chanced to be in the neighbouring compartment. The next question that he asked himself, after he had made this discovery, was who could be in there that should have need to make use of his name.

He put his ear down to the opening and listened. It must be confessed that Charlie had lost a good deal of the traditions of gentlemanlike behaviour, before he condescended thus to satisfy his curiosity. But

what will you have ? a man cannot touch pitch and fail to be defiled.

After Charlie had been in the position of a listener for a few moments, he started up suddenly as he caught the sound of the first words, for he recognized the voice as that of the third mate of the ship he had deserted. He knew the man well, and had been confided in by him on the subject of desertion. The third mate was one of the first to be missing when the ship arrived in harbour, and he had previously told Charlie that he intended to break "his articles" and to proceed to try his luck at gold-washing. How then did he come to be here, and with whom was he talking, Charlie asked himself.

He stooped once more to the opening, but this time he applied his eye and not his ear to it. There he saw, sure enough, his old comrade, Phil Carter, engaged in

confidential talk with a stranger—a tall, dark, keen-eyed man dressed like a gentleman; certainly the last sort of person one would fancy to meet in such a place as the dining-box of a sailors' boarding-house. Charlie saw the gentleman smoking a cigar and stroking his moustache thoughtfully, while Phil talked away rapidly in a low voice. He seemed weighing in his mind some probability far apart from Phil's words, though evidently the young man thought he was pondering upon what he was saying so earnestly.

Suddenly the gentleman appeared to recover from his abstraction. A look of impatience passed across his face, and he interrupted his companion with a gesture of the same nature.

"Yes, yes, my good fellow," he said; "what you say is all very well; but what is the use of telling me all about a man

who is most likely fifty miles away, in a part of the country neither of us knows anything about? When a man deserts he does not, as a rule, put an advertisement in the papers to tell any persons anxious to communicate with him where he may be found."

"But he was here three days ago," remarked Phil.

"Three days ago! Yes, of course, that was when his ship was safe at the wharf, and he was a respectable officer aboard it. Now you seem to forget that there is every reason why he should not be back at his old haunt—where everyone would recognize him as a deserter. I admit to you that he would be the very man for us—I have been honest with you, my lad, as I find it pays better in the long run, or in the short one, for that matter, to be honest and frank with everybody; I've told you

exactly what I want. You will suit me well, and so would this other fellow — what's his name—Martin?"

"Barton," said Phil.

"Well, Barton or Martin, or whatever it is, he would suit us as well for this run. If I could trust that confounded skipper of ours, I should not mind making you only mate and running the chances of the others, but the old idiot understands nothing about navigation, I fear—in fact, he confesses as much—and I must have a good man to navigate us to England."

"Barton could navigate a ship with any man alive," said Phil, emphatically. Charlie, with his ear to the hole in the partition, felt deeply complimented by what he heard.

"What is the use of talking about him now?" said the other. "He has probably made good use of his knowledge of naviga-

tion to get himself clear of the town and the harbour police."

"He didn't tell me for certain that he would go away to the gold mines," said the young man.

"I don't suppose he advertised it in the papers either, nor had posters printed to the effect that the future address of the second mate of the *Skinflint* would be the gold mines, South Australia. No, my boy; but all the same he is there, if he didn't get a knock on the head before he reached the place. Take another drink."

At this instant Charlie's listening was interfered with by the entrance into his own compartment of two strangers, and he was compelled to straighten himself and pretend to be filling his pipe.

He thought over what he had heard at the other side of the partition. It was evident that he was held in request by the

gentleman who was with Phil Carter. It seemed that Phil had been engaged by the gentleman for a voyage, and that he had been consulted as to the best means of procuring a competent chief officer, and had kindly mentioned Charlie's name as such a person. Now what course was he, Charlie, to take under such circumstances, he asked himself. Here he was, with only a few shillings in his pocket—less now, too, since he had to pay for his supper—and here was a chance offering itself for obtaining a better situation than he had ever yet filled, and all without the least solicitation on his part. Surely he could not have a doubt as to what he should do under these circumstances.

Only — why should such a reflection come to him?—he thought, "If I go away now I shall never see *her* again."

It was a strange thought for him to

have now. Three hours ago he would not have had it.

With a sudden clenching of his hands he rose to his feet, saying to himself, resolutely, "I *shall* never see her again. I want never to see her again." He left his compartment and went and knocked at the door of the next, in which Phil Carter and the stranger were sitting. His mind was made up.

CHAPTER V.

If a genuine ghost, moving in the most select circles of ghostdom, and with a social standing beyond suspicion, had appeared at the door, instead of the stalwart form of Charlie Barton, Phil Carter could not have shown more surprise. He started up from his place with an exclamation that almost made the gentleman with whom he had been sitting seem surprised, though anyone could see in a moment that it would take a good deal to affect that gentleman's nerves. When, however, he heard Phil exclaim "Charlie Barton!" the stranger's eyes opened from their half-shut glance of indifference, and Charlie felt himself being scrutinized closely, as though those dark

keen eyes meant to gaze into his inmost soul. He could feel himself become gradually hot under the influence of the searching look, and this feeling gave him an appearance of being anything but a strong-minded man.

"Why, where on earth did you drop from, Charlie?" cried Phil so soon as they had shaken hands. "By Jove, one would fancy that you had overheard what we had been saying. We were just talking about you—Mr. Stephens and I—this is Mr. Stephens." Charlie took off his cap and the gentleman nodded, smiling as Phil rattled on, addressing him. "Oh, sir, who was right about our mate, tell me that?" he cried, and the gentleman smiled again.

"Come forward, my man, and take a seat," said the person whom Phil had called Mr. Stephens. "Our friend Carter here

would go on talking his nonsense until midnight if he was permitted. But first, have you had supper?"

"I have, sir," Charlie replied. "I got supper in the next box, and it was there I thought I heard Phil's voice."

"You heard him mention your name then," said Mr. Stephens carelessly.

"You must have," said Phil, "I said I knew we should find you here. And so you didn't go to the gold-diggings."

"I certainly didn't, or I shouldn't be here now," said Charlie. "But how about yourself, Phil? I thought you had made up your mind to go up there and to come back with a fortune."

"So I did, but, like yourself, I changed my mind from what I heard and saw."

"Never mind the gold-digging," said Mr. Stephens; "we can talk about all that another time. Listen to me, Mr. Barton.

I was just telling our good friend Carter here that there was nothing like frankness in talk amongst friends. I talked to him honestly, as perhaps you may have heard, and now I mean to adopt the same method with you, if you are so minded, and I think you are, if I know anything about reading a man's character in his face. Well now, I may tell you in a word that I am the owner of a ship of nine hundred tons register which must be ready to sail for England by to-morrow night. I have already engaged a master for the voyage, and your friend Carter has signed as second mate. I have, however, been unable to satisfy myself about a chief officer. I must have a man who, in an emergency, could undertake the entire navigation. Now, Carter tells me you have a chief officer's certificate, and that you would be competent to carry out my plans—that, in fact, you

could take sole charge of the vessel for the voyage home if it was so needed; so I wish merely to ask you if you can honestly say so much for yourself. I will take your word for all you say."

"Well, sir," said Charlie, "a fellow doesn't like to begin and be his own trumpeter; but since you put it to me in the fashion you have, I think I could hardly be called a boaster if I answer you that I would undertake to navigate a ship to any part of the world, if she's found with a chronometer and sextant. That's all I can say for myself."

"I don't want you to say any more, Mr. Barton," said Mr. Stephens. "I know the reluctance of all good fellows to sound their own praises. Now, are you open to sign articles for a homeward voyage in a well-found ship?"

"Well, sir," said the other doubtfully,

"as I suppose you know how I came to leave my last ship, I needn't say anything about that."

"I told Mr. Stephens all," said Phil Carter.

"Yes," remarked that gentleman, "I happen to have heard more than once of your late skipper. He told me long ago that he found the desertion of his officers and men to pay him very well, when, like you, they went off leaving their togs aboard."

"The old ruffian!" said Phil bitterly; "if he had not pretended to be so pious on Sundays I shouldn't mind him, but to think of the way he used to force us to listen to him reading prayers with the compass on the table beside him!"

Mr. Stephens laughed. "I never heard of anything better," he said. Then he turned to Charlie. "Now, to business, Mr. Barton. I am prepared to make you

an offer of ten pounds a month so long as you stay by the *Jessica*—that's the name of my ship. The voyage will be from Melbourne to Liverpool, and if you choose to stay by her after our arrival, why, we can easily arrange for the next run."

The gentleman ceased speaking and sat with his eyes fixed in that soul-searching gaze upon the young man's face.

"I am not such a fool as to refuse an offer like this, sir," Charlie replied. "I've never sailed as anything but second mate, and mostly in smaller vessels. Yes, I'll sign the articles whenever you choose, and I'm much obliged to you for the offer."

"Hurrah," cried Phil, "we will be mates once more, old fellow. Shout for something to drink, can't you?"

"No, no," said Mr. Stephens, "no one must talk of ordering anything while I am here."

He rang the bell and told the attendant to fetch three nobblers.

"Let us drink to the voyage of the *Jessica*, my lads," he cried, as the glasses were placed before him.

"The voyage of the *Jessica*," both the young men repeated, drinking off the contents of the tumblers. The colonial paraphrase of "never make two bites of a cherry" is "never make two drinks of a nobbler," and the advice is very generally followed, with a result that is satisfactory—to the saloon-keepers at any rate.

"Now," said Mr. Stephens, "everything is off my mind; all that remains for you to do is to sign the articles, and we had better set about this at once."

He rose from his seat and took down his hat. But Charlie pulled out his watch and found that it was nearly eleven o'clock.

"Surely no office will be open now, sir," he said. "It wants only an hour of midnight."

Mr. Stephens smiled.

"Oh, yes, our agent's office will be open for some hours yet," he replied; "and I have always found that the less delay there is in matters like this the more satisfactory it is for all parties concerned. Come along." But when they were at the point of leaving he turned suddenly to Charlie, saying, "By the way, Mr. Barton, would it not be as well for you to ship under a different name? It is just possible that the name of Barton may be remembered by some people about here in connection with another vessel that was cleared out a few days ago, and I should not like any mistake to be made in this way."

The speaker smiled gently, and Phil Carter laughed loudly; but Charlie neither

laughed nor smiled. The truth was he did not like the idea of discarding his own name. There was a degree of cowardice about such an act that made it repulsive to him. He reflected, however, on the truth of what Mr. Stephens had said, and he felt that it was necessary for him to take the advice.

The gentleman's sharp eyes were all this while regarding him closely.

"What," he cried, "do you hesitate? Do you not see the truth of what I say?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," Charlie replied, recovering himself. "I know you are right—quite right; only you see, sir, I have never had cause to sail under a wrong name before, and ——"

"Why, what on earth difference can it make to you? It's done every day by the most honest men in the world. You see it

is under no circumstances a creditable thing to desert one's ship; but sometimes it's an unpleasant necessity—just like changing your name—and it must be done."

"Of course," said Charlie, "it must be done. What name shall I sign, sir?"

"Whatever you choose—Smith, or Johnston, or Brown; yes, better say Brown, as your initials will then be unchanged."

"Come along, Brown!" cried Phil, slapping him on the shoulder.

But somehow Charlie could not smile even when Mr. Stephens said, with a laugh, "Don't think that you have blackened your character because you have made your name Brown, my boy."

Phil, however, burst out into a laugh so hearty that the sallow-faced Yankee, who evidently believed in the principle of taking nobblers at single draughts, turned about, and with a fierce drunken frown demanded

if it was at him he was laughing. But Phil was outside the swing door in an instant, without waiting to make any answer.

CHAPTER VI.

It was a dark, moonless, hot night when the three men found themselves outside the boarding-house. The street down which they walked was, however, brilliantly lighted from the windows of the many saloons and eating-houses that stood all along on both sides. The street led directly to the wharves, and it was now a scene of gaiety —that is, of the type indulged in by seamen, for there was loud talking and story-telling in various languages. Here were a few Italians lounging along, singing a barcarola in their native tongue, bringing back memories of Naples to those who might chance to hear the strains; behind them came a couple of Lascars and Bengalese

singing, in their falsetto, staccato tones, one of their sea-songs as meaningless as the English comic song that the half-tipsy British sailors were yelling in their wake. Then there came loud laughter and jests, and now and again a pleasant little fight begun without much trouble and ended with as little, for the majority of the men were jovial and not yet drunk.

Down the street the three men passed, paying no more attention to anything that was going on beside them than one might do to the crowd in Regent Street. To none of the three was the scene in the street any more remarkable than the hundreds of similar scenes they had come in contact with in those strange parts of the world. Mr. Stephens was most entertaining in his chat to Charlie Barton and Phil Carter; he evidently set himself about being agreeable, and he succeeded admirably;

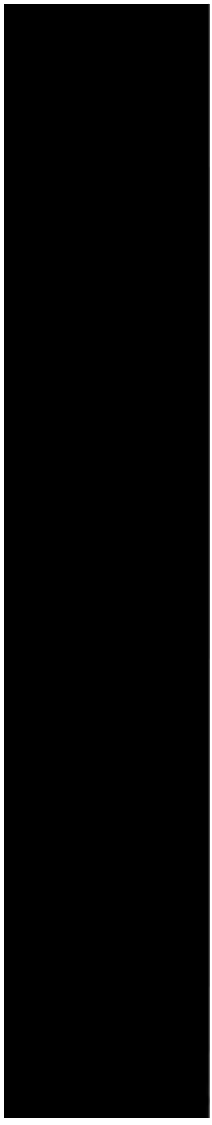
Phil roaring with laughter at everything that was said, and Charlie feeling how great was the condescension of this gentleman, who was a shipowner in an important position, in making companions of the mates he had just engaged for a voyage.

Through a good many streets Mr. Stephens led them, until they were in one of the very quietest parts of the town. The houses in the row were large, but badly built, and perhaps the oldest in the colony. Opposite one of the doors Mr. Stephens stopped and knocked, not over loud. As no light was to be seen in any of the windows, Charlie thought that a second knock would certainly be necessary. He was wrong, however, for in a few moments an uncertain light flickered through the glass frame above the door, and a voice enquired, in an unmistakable Hebrew intonation who was knocking.

"All right, Joe; we're friends," said Mr. Stephens in reply to the enquiry, and then they heard the sound of the bolts being withdrawn.

"The old man lives here alone, so that he has need to be cautious after night-fall in such a place as this," the gentleman remarked in explanation to the young men before the door was opened, and they saw standing in the narrow bare hall the shrunken form of an old man in a dressing-gown, holding a flickering candle in one hand and endeavouring to shield it from the draft with the other.

"Come inshide, shentlemen, come inshide," said the little old man, waving his hand and bowing with a smile, the hideousness of which was fully shown by the glare of the candle he held. A yellow face, with an enormous hooked nose, and a mouth devoid of the least appearance of a tooth,



is not the most advantageous surface for a smile to display itself upon.

"We will come in, Joe, my friend," said Mr. Stephens.

"Proud to see you, shir; very proud, I'm sure. Didn't half expect you."

"Didn't I tell you I would be here about midnight? Never mind. This gentleman I have engaged as chief officer of the *Jessica*, and the other as the second mate. They are anxious to sign the papers, so if you will get them ready we will be obliged to you."

"Shertainly, shir; shtep thish way into the offish and make yourshelves comfortable, shentlemen."

The young men turned into a room the old Jew pointed out to the right of the hall, into which he brought his candle to light the gas. It was a large square room, fitted up in such a manner as caused

it to seem like a cross between a badly-furnished private room and a regular counting-house. There were about the room several desks and stools, all of which were extremely well worn, and in one corner was a horsehair sofa, that possessed all the appearance of having been in every sense "sat upon" for a good many years. The steeds whose manes had furnished material for the cloth might have been those that William the Conqueror and his Normans had ridden.

To this sofa the old man pointed blandly, and, in accordance with his sign, the two young men seated themselves, wondering at these strange proceedings on the part of the owner of a vessel. Mr. Stephens had not entered the room, however; he remained in the hall, and when the Jew observed this, having lighted the gas, he left the young men alone, and a few moments afterwards they heard him exchanging whispers out-

side with Mr. Stephens. It could scarcely be said that they felt re-assured through the fact of their having remarked these confidential interchanges. In a short time Mr. Stephens and the Jew, whom he now called Mr. Braham, entered the room, and Charlie could see yet lingering about the lean jaws of the old man a smile as hideous as the former had seemed.

"Now, Mr. Braham, while you fill up the forms—merely matters of form these things are—if you will just put out the bottles upon the table we shall feel obliged to you."

"Shertainly, shir, shertainly; here they are," and he extracted from a deep desk a case of bottles—rum, brandy, and whiskey—which he put upon the table with tumblers and water.

"Now, my boys," said Mr. Stephens, "we'll just take a glass apiece before we

transact our business. Mr. Braham will leave the forms of agreement ready for your signature in about a quarter of an hour. By the way, Joe, where is the skipper?"

"Ash usual, shir, ash usual—sleeping it off, shir."

"Confound him! he'll have to change his tune when he comes aboard my ship," said Mr. Stephens. Then he turned to the young men. "You know what he is sleeping off, I dare say," he said, with a laugh. "Ah, yes," he continued, "our poor skipper has got his failings, like all of us. His failing at present is an ardent attachment to a bottle of rum. At sea he is, I know, a first-rate sailor, and never thinks of touching anything, but the instant he sets his foot ashore he gets a bottle of rum into his hand and never lets it go except to have it re-filled when he has emptied it. We can do nothing to

change him, and only that he is such a good seaman it would be better for us to have nothing more to say to him. Ah! poor Butcher. Will you take brandy, Carter?"

"Thank you, sir; I'll just take half a nobbler," said Phil.

"Very well; I never insist on my men drinking; it's a bad plan, I think."

"I should say most men do not require you to compel them to drink, sir," remarked Charlie.

"Certainly not Captain Butcher," said Mr. Stephens laughing, and handing each of the young men a tumbler. "Now then," he continued, when he had filled up a glass for himself, "let us drink success to the *Jessica!*"

"Success to the *Jessica!*" repeated the young men, drinking; and, as if the toast contained within it some hidden jest, which

he alone could perceive, the face of the Jew was overspread with another of those peculiar smiles of his, only this last one was infinitely worse than the others. The old man was busying himself with a number of papers while Mr. Stephens went on talking, taking care that the glasses of the young men were never empty for a minute. Sailors, it is well known, are not, as a rule, models of unassailable sobriety on shore; but Charlie and Phil had not been in the habit of indulging in excesses at any port. Now, however, as their glasses were filled by a gentleman who had assured them that his principles were identical with their own, they seemed to think that the spirit would be robbed of its evil power. They accepted what was offered to them with as much confidence as if it had been compounded by a medical man.

In about a quarter of an hour whatever

forms there were to sign had been made out, and Charlie, giving only a glance to the document that was to bind him as chief mate for the voyage of the *Jessica* from Melbourne to England, affixed the name Charles Brown to the proper place. Phil Carter did not even glance over the form that was laid before him; sailor-like, he signed it, though it might have been the indenture of an apprentice for all he knew about it.

"Well, that is so far settled," said Mr. Stephens. "Let us have another drink together! Oh, nonsense; you will force me to break through my rules, and insist upon your taking something. It's not as if you had a day's work before you."

The young men, not having taken more than a glass of diluted brandy previously, did not steadily refuse the drink that Mr. Stephens insisted on offering them. They took another small glass each, and then rose

to return to the boarding-house; the fact being that they were anxious to exchange opinions in private regarding this shipping in so unusual a manner.

"Now, sir, we must be off, as it's so very late," said Charlie. "What time shall we see you in the morning?"

"What time?" repeated Mr. Stephens, with a little laugh, that seemed too careless to be natural. "What time? Why, you don't surely think that I would be brute enough to take you away from the boarding-house and leave you to trust to your own guiding to find the way back. No, my lads! you don't know me if you fancy I am like that. The fact is I have arranged with Joe Braham here to give you both comfortable beds for to-night. Haven't I, Joe?"

"Shertainly, shentlemen, shertainly."

"The skipper is in the house; so that you can make his acquaintance the first

thing in the morning. Besides that, you will get a good rest, what you could never hope for in that crowded boarding-house: and you will not be tempted to drink here or get into a row."

It was in vain that the young men protested they could find their way back without any difficulty; Mr. Stephens would not hear of their leaving. He was not such a brute as to turn them out when it was already long past midnight, he said; and neither of them could insist further when he put their departure in such a light. They could not, of course, think of hurting the feelings of so sensitive a gentleman. They re-seated themselves and Mr. Stephens handed them a bulky cigar-case well filled.

"You will find them quite equal to anything you would be able to procure at a Melbourne boarding-house, I assure you,"

he said laughing, as he bit the end off a cigar for himself.

When they had lit their cigars, Mr. Stephens threw himself in an easy attitude upon the sofa, in spite of its wooden shrieks of dismay, and began questioning both of his mates in a lively and agreeable way regarding their former ships and places of sailing. He himself seemed to be acquainted with every port and with the names of brother merchants at each place. As he talked, he by no means neglected to fill his own glass or those of the young men, from time to time; but he did it in such a quiet, natural, and mechanical way that it did not seem to them to be like drinking steadily when their tumblers were never more than half empty. They, however, waxed very voluble as the night went on, and before an hour had passed they were both talking loudly in duet about subjects quite foreign

to their original chat together; later still Phil Carter had volunteered to sing a song he said he had learned in his infancy. He gave them a history of the song, but when he tried to sing it so many other airs passed through his memory he seemed to become somewhat confused.

"You had better think of it for awhile, my lad," said Mr. Stephens.

"You're right—ah, yes, quite right—right—I'll think 'bout it now. Wait f'r awhile—wait," murmured Phil, waving his hand complacently, and laying his head down upon the table. But though everyone waited, it could hardly be said that the result was agreeable, for if the sounds that came from the young man's nose in a few minutes were meant to be an air, it could only be said that a more monotonous melody had never been composed.

"We'd best carry him off to his hammock,

captain," said Charlie, who was evidently at sea in his mind. "Yes, we'll put him into the fo'c'stle at once, sir; the ship's getting very unsteady. Do you feel how it's rolling? By George, captain, I can hardly keep my feet. Royals, m' lads, royals—all hands aloft take in royals."

"All right," said Mr. Stephens; "come aloft."

And he assisted him out of the room and upstairs, for poor Charlie was very much at sea, indeed. It did not take a great deal of coaxing to send him to sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

When Charlie Barton awoke in the morning he found himself in a comfortable bed, but he had evidently been in a hurry to get into it, for he was only half undressed. He lay awake for a considerable time, wondering much at all he could recollect of the previous day, and suffering from a mixture of shame and distrust. He thought a great deal about this gentleman who could talk quietly of his reluctance to force people to drink, and yet in a few hours afterwards cause two naturally sober men to go to bed in a state of intoxication; and he arrived at the conclusion that the man who could act in this manner was extremely clever indeed. And then he recollected how Mr. Stephens

had seemed to read in the faces of the mates the desire they had to exchange confidences so soon as they had signed the agreements, and how he had contrived that they should not have an opportunity of doing so, and, perhaps, of changing their minds regarding the voyage they had agreed to sail. Charlie knew that in a Colonial port, like Melbourne, men have been known to sign in one day agreements to sail in three different ships, and yet to have gone in none of them in the end, but up to the gold mines; and that, in consequence of this doubtfully humorous practice, ship-agents had a prejudice in favour of seeing a sailor safe aboard the ship as soon as possible after signing the articles. It was just likely, he thought, that Mr. Stephens had heard of sailors' ways in Melbourne, and so had determined to make sure of his new officers.

Well, he had made sure of them, Charlie knew, and he could not but conclude on this ground also that Mr. Stephens was a clever man, nay, that he resorted to sharp practice in his cleverness.

Then Charlie's thoughts went back to the occurrence of the early part of the day; but he did not think so much of his scuffle with the miner as of his few minutes of conversation with the young lady. He never felt his position as a seaman to be so humble as he did when he reflected upon the appearance of that girl. He had not believed that anyone could be so condescending as she had been to him. She had actually shaken hands with him and—but what did it matter now? It had only been happiness for a moment; now it was past for ever. In a few days he would be hundreds of miles away from her and he would never see her again. She would exist in his mind only as

a memory of something beautiful—a lovely night vision that fades away at the first movement of the silver wings of morning. The morning had come to him and the vision of that face must flee away. He knew that, and yet the vision remained clear and steadfast before him as if it had been a reality.

He leaped out of bed and made preparations for dressing, for he was resolved to think no more of the sweet face that made him feel so dissatisfied with himself—with his past life, with his future prospects. Yes, he would think no more of that beautiful girl whom he had met by a fatal chance that threatened to overturn his peace of mind. His peace had not yet been overturned, and he made a resolution that it should not be—he would blot out even the memory of her, and he would submit to his fate, which was, of course, to be a good honest seaman to the end of his life.

He had not finished dressing when Mr. Stephens came into his room, looking as fresh and as agreeable as possible.

"I hope you slept well, my lad," he said graciously. "You look first rate, indeed. Come down when you are ready, and I will see that breakfast is prepared for you."

He left the room before Charlie could say a word, and the young man continued his toilet alone. When he went down stairs a short time afterwards he found Mr. Braham, the old Jew, waiting apparently for his descent. He was smiling even more hideously than ever.

"Glad to shee you well thish morning, shir; hope you've shlept well, shir. Thish way for breakfasht—thish way, shir."

Charlie followed him into a small room at the back of the house, where he found Phil Carter already seated at breakfast, with Mr. Stephens and another person. The

stranger was a middle-aged man, with an exceedingly red face bordered on each side by short bristly red whiskers, and traversed by a moustache of the same type and colour. His eyes were small and bloodshot, and as Charlie saw them there was certainly a heavy look about them. This person sat with a half-empty tumbler and a square bottle of rum before him. It was apparently his peculiar fancy to breakfast off this ingredient. That he had frequently done so there could not be a doubt, if there was any conclusion to be drawn from the appearance of his face.

"Ah, Mr. Brown, you have arrived last of all of us. Let me introduce you to your new captain. This is, Mr. Brown, your chief officer, Captain Butcher."

Charlie bowed to the man with the red face, in response to which the man looked up for the first time with his heavy eyes to

Charlie's face. So soon as it seemed to dawn upon him that the young man was saluting him, a slow smile spread over his face, like a breeze over an ocean in sunset.

"How're you, old f'lah?" he muttered, nodding. "You're my shief off'cer. Ver' good, only mind, I say, that you don't f'get that I'm your s'perior—your capt'n. No nonsense, old f'lah, an' then—then we'll al'ays be as we are jus' now"—here he looked affectionately at the rum-bottle, and continued—"Yes, as we are jus' now—the bes' friends in the world. I'll al'ays love you as a brother—as a mother—no, brother's mother—not 'tall—mother's brother, I mean—yes, yes—murrer brurrer."

And having concluded this graceful piece of oratory to the rum-bottle, he refilled his tumbler and drank off the contents without shrinking. It was a terrible trick, that, like swallowing swords and tight-rope walking,

could not be performed without a good deal of practice beforehand; but no one could doubt, from the easy manner in which the captain executed the feat, that he was a complete master of the art necessary for its execution.

Charlie looked over to Phil in a significant way, but Phil seemed too busily engaged at his plate of beef to pay any attention to his sign. Charlie, however, was well aware that Phil did not mean to catch his eye; he thought it likely that Phil was feeling a good deal ashamed of his worse than weakness of the night before, though, for that matter, Charlie himself had as good reason for that feeling as anyone.

"Let him drink away to his heart's content," whispered Mr. Stephens to Charlie as the latter sat down. "Pay no attention to him if he should get a little noisy."

"All right, sir," said Charlie.

"And now I must leave you for a short

time," said the owner, rising and putting on his hat. "I need scarcely tell you that I have a good deal to look after to-day. I will return and let you know what arrangements we come to about the sailing of the ship, and I will give you whatever advance of your wages you may need. As I cannot tell the instant I may return, it is necessary that you should remain here till I see you. You will do so?"

"Certainly," said Charlie, "we will not leave the house."

"Could I not have time to run round to the boarding-house for my togs, sir?" asked Phil.

"Much better wait until I see you first and tell you about the sailing arrangements," answered Mr. Stephens, going out of the room.

Then there was a long silence as the two young men continued their breakfast, and

the skipper, who possessed such simple tastes in this way, filled out for himself with a shaky hand another tumbler of rum, diluted only so slightly that it would have passed even the Excise authorities as pure liquor.

Suddenly the silence was broken by the skipper bursting into a loud laugh after tossing off the last glass. Both of the young men were startled and looked up. Still the man's laughter continued, his face getting more scarlet every moment, and finally purple, until they feared he would become a victim to apoplexy, or else go off like an over-inflated balloon. Fortunately, however, his fit subsided, and he managed to jerk out the words looking towards the door, "Who's that jus' gone out?"

"Mr. Stephens, sir," answered Charlie.

"Who's he?"

"The owner of the *Jessica*, that we've shipped in," said Charlie.

Again the skipper burst into a tipsy laugh that continued for some moments.

"Yes, yes," he murmured so soon as the spasm was over. "He's the owner of the *Jess'ca*. D'ye know him, m' lad?"

"Well, yes, I may say I do," said Charlie. "He brought me here and engaged me as mate."

"And you know him too, I suppose you'll say?" said the skipper, turning to Phil.

"Yes, I do know him," said Phil doggedly.

Once more the man was convulsed with laughter. He shook on his chair and the very table vibrated until the bottle was in jeopardy; it was his noticing of this that probably caused him to check himself.

"You both know him, you think; ver' good—such a joke—licks all I ever heard," he said, shaking his head. "No, no, m' lads; you don't know anyth'g 'bout him—

he's beyond you both—beyond all of us. But you'll know him soon 'nough—yes, yes, soon 'nough you'll know all 'bout him."

"What do you mean by that, sir?" cried Charlie quickly.

"Mean? what d' I mean? oh, nothing—nothing, m' lad—nothing in the world, of course. Fact is I'm drunk—'fernally drunk, you know—don't know what I'm talking 'bout—that sort o' thing. Yes, yes; you think you know me as well, but you're wrong there too. I'm not so smart as him, but I'm too smart for you both, drunk or sober."

"I daresay you are," said Charlie. "At any rate, you are able to mystify us now completely."

"All right, all right. Take glass of rum, old f'lah, and maybe you'll look at things in a straighter way."

"I don't want to drink anything," said

Charlie, rising from the table and filling his pipe.

"All right, we're as good friends as ever, eh, aren't we?" As he was again apparently addressing the bottle, Charlie did not think it necessary to make any reply, nor did the skipper seem to expect any.

Phil also rose, but did not go over to the side of his friend, the fact being that he could see without much difficulty that Charlie was beginning to have suspicions regarding this condescending owner of the vessel in which they had agreed to sail, and his having introduced Charlie to the gentleman caused him to feel a little uneasy.

Charlie, however, did not seem to look at things in the same light, for he went over to Phil, saying in a whisper, "Well, Phil, what do you think of the Melbourne way of shipping?"

But before the other could answer, the skipper had turned round. "Look here," he said, in a decided voice of which they did not believe him capable, "no whisp'ring in the presence of your capt'n, young men. Don't you make any mistake 'bout that—I'm the chief, and I'll be respected drunk or sober."

The young men could not, of course, exchange notes while they were so restricted. They could only sit before the window, that looked out on a large open space of ground, and smoke their pipes, while the skipper continued to practise that peculiar trick of his with the rum. He drank glass after glass, until they wondered how it was posble for any man single-handed and single-mouthed to get rid of such a quantity. After a couple of hours this severe and constant work told upon the man, for though it was impossible for his face to

become more lurid than it was already, yet his voice had still got a margin of sobriety in its tones, and upon this margin he drew very considerably in the course of the second hour. In fact, by the end of this time its last trace of coherency had departed. He murmured and muttered and sang snatches of tunes, but nothing was now intelligible. Finally he rose and began making a speech in this new-found language, but before he had got well under weigh he swung round, made a grasp for the bottle—missed it, and then fell sideways into his chair, from which he slid gracefully to the floor, and there, with his arm clasping a leg of the table, he went asleep.

Charlie now found the opportunity he had been longing for to speak to his companion. He went over to Phil, saying in a low tone, "Well, I suppose we can speak together now."

"I suppose we can," answered Phil carelessly.

"What do you think of things in general, Phil?"

"There's nothing to be thought about anything," said Phil.

"What! you don't think this method of shipping jolly rum?"

"It doesn't matter what I think. We're shipped now and that's the end of it. If I think anything it is, of course, that we are better off than we have ever been yet as regards the ship."

"And the owner?"

"Hang it all, Charlie!" cried Phil, "what do you mean by asking me such questions? Hasn't the owner treated us well up to the present? You can't say he has not. Then why should you be suspicious?"

"How do you know that I am suspicious? I didn't tell you that I was so."

"No, but I can see by the way you ask me these questions."

"And I can see by the way you answer them, Phil, that you are more suspicious than I am."

"I suspicious? You are astray this time, Charlie. What have I to be suspicious about? Haven't we signed the usual agreement? Hasn't Mr. Stephens been particularly decent to us in letting us remain here all night? Many an owner would have let us go away last night to hunt out the boarding-house."

Charlie smiled. "Yes; and many a seaman, if so permitted, would never have turned up again," he said. "Never mind, Phil; as you say, here we are, and it doesn't matter what we may think about it. But I wanted to ask you how you became acquainted with Mr. Stephens. Have you known him long?"

"Long! Why, I only met him yesterday morning. There was a saloon I went into with a chum I had picked up, and the keeper of the place seemed to know that I had taken French leave of the ship, so we got into conversation. He asked me if I had ever sailed as chief mate, and when he heard I hadn't he enquired if I knew of anyone who would be open for such a situation. I thought, of course, of you, and mentioned your name to the man, and then he told me he knew of the owner of a ship who wanted a first and a second mate. Just as we were talking Mr. Stephens came in, and the saloon-keeper introduced me to him, and told him that I had sailed as second mate for the past year. He said that the procuring of a second mate was not his difficulty, but the getting of a good chief; and also that his ship was almost ready for sea, and that she was eight

hundred tons burthen. I repeated to him what I had told to the saloon-keeper, and it ended in his engaging me on the spot, and, after a time, we went to hunt for you."

"And you found me, Phil," said Charlie. "Well, old boy, I'm much obliged to you for your recommendation, and I hope it will turn out as well as you meant it."

"I had no idea that you were so suspicious," said Phil, restlessly. "Everything goes along first rate, so far; and yet, from the way you talk, one might fancy that Mr. Stephens was a scoundrel, who had entrapped two poor innocent young fellows. Hang it all, are we not in the same boat in every sense? If you come to grief, won't I do the same?"

"Phil, old fellow," said Charlie, seriously, "give me your hand. Let us swear solemnly, here, that we will stick by each other, come what will."

"Why, of course we will stick by each other in any case. What is the good of going through any form?"

"It's merely a whim of mine, and you won't mind humouring it, Phil. Here, give me your paw."

"There, then, if you will have it so," said Phil, giving him his hand.

Charlie took it and held it in a hearty grip. "Now, then," he said, "we are bound together; and clever though this Mr. Stephens may be, still we shall be more than a match for him."

"Hang me if ever I met with so ungrateful a fellow as you are," cried Phil, trying in vain to appear angry and indignant, but only succeeding in showing what a bad actor he was.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was already an hour past noon and yet Mr. Stephens had not returned, though he had certainly given the two young men to understand that he would not be long absent. The old Jew entered the room just then, and from him Charlie demanded to know at what time Mr. Stephens would return.

"Shoon, shentlemen, shoon," he replied with another of his smiles.

"But he has been already away three hours, and when he left he was to be back soon," said Phil.

"Vell, young man, if he vas to be back shoon three hours ago, he vill surely be back the shooner now."

This argument there was no disputing. It completely silenced the two young men. Mr. Braham then gave the prostrate form of the skipper a few moderate kicks, but no appreciable effect was produced upon him.

"The beasht hash been drinking again," muttered the Jew.

"Again?" said Phil; "I don't think he allowed himself any interval."

Mr. Braham made his exit without further remark, but in about another hour he returned with some cold meat and bread.

"You'll mosht likely be hungry, shentlemen," he said, laying the eatables on the table with a couple of plates.

"I would much rather go to the boarding-house; it's not customary for owners to provide for the ship's company when ashore," said Charlie.

"Ah, shir; you don't know Mishter Sthephens," said the old man, unconsciously repeating the skipper's words. "He ish far too kind a shentleman to let you lose yourshelf looking for the boarding-house. Oh, he ish far too kind."

"Yes," said Charlie, "we feel his kindness, I can assure you."

"Ah, yesh; he saysh to me, 'Joe,' saysh he, 'don't let thosh two shentlemen want for noshings ven I'm avay; give them plenty to eat and drink.' Thosh vere his vordsh."

"Well, you may meet him at any time with a clear conscience," said Phil, sitting down to the table and beginning to carve the beef.

The old man shuffled out of the room, and once more the two mates were alone, for the unconscious skipper did not count for anything.

They scarcely exchanged a word during the entire time of their dinner, and when they had finished the meal each arose separately and lit his pipe. Then the silence of the place, and the lateness of the hour at which they had gone to bed on the previous night, contributed to make them both drowsy, for within half-an-hour they were sound asleep, Phil in his chair and Charlie upon the sofa.

Then a strange dream came to Charlie. He fancied that he had already embarked in the *Jessica* and the vessel was far out at sea. A dead calm was over the water on every side, so that the ship was lying motionless. He seemed to be alone upon the deck, and he called out for some of the crew. Then he thought that Mr. Stephens came to him, smiling, and said, "I will get a crew for you;" and at that instant a crowd of hideous creatures like spectres

sprang up from the deck, and stood pointing and gibbering at him. He went backwards, as if to escape them, but on looking behind him towards the cabin he saw Mr. Stephens trying to force someone overboard —a girl, who stretched out her arms and cried to Charlie to save her. The voice was that of the young lady whom he had saved from the insult of the drunken miner, and the face of his dream was the same also. He then thought that he was rushing forward to rescue her from Stephens, when, in front of him and all around him, arose flames from the deck; still he struggled on until his arm was about the young lady. But Stephens grasped him by the shoulder and dragged him over to the side of the ship. He struggled, but it seemed to be all in vain; the other had hold of him still by the shoulder, until with one gigantic effort he freed himself and—he awoke;

to find Mr. Stephens, in reality, standing before him, shaking him by the arm to arouse him, and the room was dark, except where the light of a lantern held by the old Jew was glimmering.

"Get up, like a good fellow," said the owner. "We have no time to spare."

Charlie started up and recovered himself. "What a dream I have had!" he exclaimed.

"Never mind the dream now," said Mr. Stephens impatiently. "This is not a time for dreaming; we have work to do, I can assure you. We mustn't lose an hour; the *Jessica* must be under weigh before midnight, and it is now ten o'clock."

Mr. Stephens had said that he would return to tell the mates what day the vessel would be ready. He now came to tell them, not the day, but the hour. It is

scarcely to be wondered at that they were surprised.

"But about my togs, sir," cried Phil; "they are still at the boarding-house."

"They are not," answered Mr. Stephens; "I sent for them, and now they are safe in your cabin in the *Jessica*. Curse this drunken beast!" he continued, giving the prostrate body of the captain a kick, "How are we ever to get him aboard?"

It was truly a nice question, and the captain himself contributed nothing towards its solution.

"Get up, you old fool," cried Mr. Stephens in the man's ear.

"All right, all right, old f'lah, I'll g' up in time when it's morning," murmured the captain, turning over and grasping the leg of the table still more earnestly.

"Confound him! he will destroy all unless we secure him properly," said Mr.

Stephens impatiently. "Here, Mr. Brown, lend a hand, the dingy is at the door. Take him by the feet."

The speaker caught the half-insensible man by the shoulders and partially raised him. The much more difficult task of raising his feet was left to Charlie. The captain, however, was much too far reduced to be able to use his legs offensively; as Phil put it, he hadn't a kick left in him; and so by the united efforts of Charlie and Phil at his feet and Mr. Stephens at his head, he was borne out to the door of the house, where a covered dingy was waiting. By two of the men mounting the vehicle behind and tugging at his arms, while another hoisted him up by the stirrup iron, the captain of the ship *Jessica* was put into the dingy as if he had been a bale of goods.

"Sit down behind and keep your feet on

him to steady him," said Mr. Stephens to Phil.

Phil obeyed. Then Charlie was motioned to mount beside the driver in front, and after a few minutes' conversation with the old Jew, Mr. Stephens got up behind and the colonial cart drove off rapidly, before Charlie had recovered from his dream sufficiently to feel that all this strange proceeding was taking place in real life.

Down through the mazes of dark streets the dingy took its way, none of the party speaking a word with the exception of the prostrate skipper, who seemed to be feebly protesting against the shaking which he was undergoing: for even the steadying influence of Mr. Stephens' feet was not enough to prevent the unfortunate man from meeting a few severe jerks as the wheels passed over some awkward stones. At last, however, the line of wharves came in sight, and

by the side of one the vehicle directed its course.

All of the ships seemed quite silent as they lay alongside, with their high masts and yards outlined against the sky, and motionless among the stars. Their hours for taking in cargo had passed long since, and all about them was quiet. But when the cart had driven to the extreme end of the wharf Charlie saw that opposite the ship lying furthest out there was some bustle; men with lanterns were evidently engaged in taking packages aboard, and the decks were not empty.

"Confound them!" said Mr. Stephens through his set teeth. "I gave them orders to have everything ready by the time I should come down, and here they are taking in packages still. This is the ship," he added by way of explanation to Charlie, as the vehicle pulled up alongside the last

vessel of the line. She seemed, as seen from the wharf, to be even larger than eight hundred tons, and she stood very high out of the water, showing that she was not heavily laden.

Mr. Stephens was the first to get down, and he went hastily over to one of the men in front of the gangway, to whom he spoke a few words; he then returned to the cart, saying, "Some additional packages arrived late, but they will be stowed in a few minutes, and all will be clear. You may go aboard at once; only how about the skipper? We must manage to get him aboard by some means, if we should have to hoist him by the windlass."

There was, however, no need to adopt these extreme measures, for when the dingy came to a standstill the captain lifted up his head and looked about him.

"I'm a jelly," he muttered. "Hang me

if there's a bone left in my body. Yes, yes, I'm a pulp—a jelly-fish, by Jingo. That cart ! "

" It's your own fault for making an unmitigated fool of yourself in getting drunk on such a day as this. However, the shaking seems to have done you good, so you should be thankful for it. Get out now if you can. We've no time to lose."

" If I can," repeated the skipper mournfully. " Why, you might pour me out now ; I tell you I'm nothing more than a jelly. You might strain me through a sieve. It's a fact."

" The best part of you is liquor if not liquid, I can well believe," said Stephens. " At any rate, come down and get aboard, unless you want to be left behind."

" Left behind my own ship ! What d'ye mean, sir ? Do you mean to tell me I'm not chief ? If you talk much more I'll

have you in irons before you can turn round."

The speaker made a determined attempt to descend with dignity, but, unfortunately missing the stirrup iron, he went forward, and would have fallen but for the support of Phil Carter, who caught him. He contrived, however, to walk aboard the ship, the two young men being on either side of him, Mr. Stephens following, and to find his way to the stern compartment of the deck-house.

"Remember now what I told you about taking sole command of the ship, Mr. Brown," said Stephens. "You are in command at present."

Just then one of the sailors, who had been overlooking the shipping of the last packages, came up and touched his cap to Mr. Stephens, saying, "All clear now, sir."

"You are sure nothing has been omitted, boatswain?"

"Certain, sir."

"Then we may cast off at any time. The wind is against us, but we can tack out of the bay. By the way, this is your boatswain, Mr. Brown. You will find him the right man in the right place, I think. Mr. Brown is in command at present, boatswain, so that you will take your orders from him."

The man touched his cap to Charlie. He was a low-set but powerfully-built man, with eyes that were disagreeably sharp, and it was almost entirely in his eyes that the expression of face dwelt; for his mouth, chin, and cheeks were covered with hair, not long and not bushy, but short and clipped evenly round like a hedge.

"Now, Mr. Brown, you will lose not a moment in getting clear," said Mr. Stephens. "I myself am obliged to go down to the cabin for some time, but I expect to feel the ship under weigh at once."

"All right, sir," said Charlie, and then Mr. Stephens disappeared by the companion to the cabin, the boatswain remaining by the side of Charlie for orders.

"Send some men aloft to shake out the sails, boatswain," said the young man. "Mr. Carter will look after the unmooring."

"All right, sir, we will set all plain sail," said the man; and a few minutes afterwards the men were in the shrouds, going aloft to the sails. Charlie had lost no opportunity of observing the men composing the crew, and he was forced to confess that he had never seen a more unpleasant looking ship's company. He also noticed that there were a number of Lascars, more than ordinarily ill-favoured. But of course the young man had not any chance of close scrutiny; in daylight the men might have seemed as good as the regular run of seamen. A ship's company, he was well aware, was not usually

selected on account of the good looks of the men ; and he could not but acknowledge, as he saw the sails shaken out, that this duty was done in a proper and sailor-like manner.

The sails were finally set, a man was placed at the wheel, and a course given to him ; and the ship having been unmoored, she drifted slowly away from the wharf, until the wind caught her sails, when her head swung round and the soft gurgle of the ripples around the rudder was heard as she ran out on the first tack.

"Get the topsails and t'gallants set, Mr. Carter," said Charlie, wishing to make the most of the fresh breeze that was blowing from the south-east, a direction that forced them to tack out. However, as the ship sailed very close to the wind, though the quarter from which it was blowing was unfavourable, she would still be out of the bay

by the morning, Charlie calculated; and when once outside, the direction of the wind could be taken advantage of. Phil Carter carried out the first mate's directions, and in less than a quarter of an hour the three masts were covered with canvas, the vessel bending gracefully to leeward as she plunged through the light waves that came rolling into the bay. In another half-hour the lights of Melbourne had become dim as the stars on the horizon, as with long steady tacks the good ship *Jessica* made her way towards the entrance to the bay in the darkness.

The first mate was kept busy seeing that everything was done properly through the entire night; the tacks having to be altered every now and again, involved a great deal of trouble and a constant attention on his part. As the tacks became wider, however, he had some moments to reflect upon his

position. He knew himself aboard a good ship, in a responsible situation, and on the fair way to receive further advancement; above all, he was at his favourite occupation, and as he felt the strong prow leap and plunge through the waves on every side, he made up his mind that there was no life worthy of being compared with this life of a sailor. The air of freedom that a man breathes from the sea he now felt upon his face, fresh and sweet as of old, and it was to him as the caress of a hand that he loved in the past days. The sea appeared to him as a mother, for he thought of it not as an inanimate but as a living thing, full of all the affections of life. He would not now have exchanged places with any-one on land.

But as he looked towards the circle of faint lights that marked the great city of the southern hemisphere, he could not help

thinking how every moment was taking him farther away from the face that somehow had become the one pleasant memory of all his life on land. He felt how strange indeed it was that the few minutes he had spent with the young lady in the street, two days before, had become the dearest memory he treasured of the land—not merely the land he had left behind him, but of all lands he had ever visited.

"Eight knots the last tack, sir," said a quartermaster, coming up to him after a heave of the log. And so his reflections passed away, and he turned once more to the business of life.

When within a short time of dawn, while the *Jessica* was nearing the entrance to the bay, the wind began sensibly to freshen, and the waves to increase in size and force as they rolled in from the southern ocean:

Charlie thought that if the wind became at all stronger he would take the precaution of shortening sail. As, however, the ship bore without difficulty all that was at present upon her he did not feel uneasy, but told the second mate to turn into his cabin for a few hours. Phil was unwilling at first, but as Charlie said he should want him on deck early in the morning he consented, and Charlie was left alone.

His surmise regarding the freshening of the breeze proved correct, for by the time the first grey streak of dawn had scattered its silver over the waters, the vessel was showing a tendency to labour. He ordered the royals to be shortened, and when that duty was done, and the men had come from aloft, the dawn was far advanced, and the speed of the vessel had increased to eight-and-a-half knots.

"The second tack after this should bring

us out, boatswain," remarked the young man, as the boatswain stood looking attentively towards the land they had left.

The boatswain made no reply, only continued observing some object closely, and then asked the chief officer for the loan of the pilot-glass for a moment. Charlie passed the glass to him, saying, "What are you looking at so attentively? Is it that tug-steamer that is coming up so quickly?"

"Yes, sir; it's that steamer I'm looking at. She is coming up well, indeed."

"I didn't think that the tugs came so far out," said Charlie; "besides, the wind is in the favour of any vessel going into harbour."

"It is, sir; but it's not an inward-bound ship that steamer is looking after."

"It's coming on well to the entrance."

"It is, indeed, sir; very well."

"We shall see it when we get upon the next tack. If it keeps on its present course we ought to pass very close to it."

"That's what I fancy the people aboard mean us to do."

"Why, we should have no need for the services of a tug," said Charlie, quickly.

"But they may need ours," replied the man.

"What do you mean?" asked Charlie. "Do you know what steamer it is?"

"I do, sir; that is the police-boat," answered the man, quietly, going down to the cabin before the other could ask him what the police-boat meant by coming out to intercept the ship.

In a moment afterwards Mr. Stephens came on deck with the boatswain, and walked up to Charlie, saying cheerily, "Well, Mr. Brown, we have come along

well so far, I think. How are your orders carried out?"

"Nothing could be better, sir," answered Charlie.

"That's right," said the owner. "If this run of the ship is a successful one, you know what I told you to expect. Just lend me that glass for an instant."

Charlie handed him the pilot-glass, which he at once directed towards the advancing steamer.

"The boatswain tells me that is the police-boat, sir," said Charlie.

"Dear me! what can it want with us?" said Mr. Stephens.

"It's likely they want to overhaul our company to see if we have any man aboard who has deserted from another ship," remarked the boatswain; adding, "I heard that the authorities were beginning to be very particular in that way, lately."

Stephens looked towards Charlie in a suggestive manner, saying with an affectation of carelessness, "Ah, that does not matter much to us, not having anyone of that sort aboard. But hang me if I allow my ship to be overhauled by these fellows! I would fight them first." And so saying he walked aft to the captain's cabin, at the rear of the deck-house.

Charlie stood watching the progress of the steamer, wondering if, indeed, it was possible that it was coming to board the *Jessica* for the sake of finding out if there was in the company any man who had deserted from another ship. He did not think it likely that the authorities would take such trouble about a matter that could be of little concern to themselves. At any rate, if Mr. Stephens decided on resisting the authorities, there was nothing to be done on his part, for, on the whole, he

could not deny that his sympathies were strongly in favour of the ship in which he was sailing. He felt that the circumstance of being himself a deserter from another vessel left him hardly in a position to be on the side of the police authorities. This, he was forced to acknowledge to himself, was scarcely a creditable feeling to possess.

While he stood watching the steamer Mr. Stephens came out of the deck-house, and by his side was Captain Butcher and the boatswain, the former being apparently quite sober, though, of course, it could not be expected that he could hold the pilot-glass steadily enough to his eyes to allow of his getting any object within his line of vision for longer than a few seconds. He gave up the glass with a shake of his head, and then spoke for a short time to Stephens and the boatswain.

In a few moments Stephens disappeared into a second cabin at the rear of the deck-house, and came out of it again with a couple of rifles and a revolver, which he laid down at the foot of the bulwarks far astern. This certainly looked like business, and Charlie began to feel more and more uncomfortable and doubtful.

"Helm hard over! Stand by hal-yards!"

The vessel was brought up to the wind, and set upon a new tack, by which the entrance to the bay should be cleared. But the steamer, through continuing its course in a straight line, would not fail to intercept the *Jessica* before the half of the second tack should be completed. A few of the sailors glanced from time to time over the side, and seemed to be observing this fact. Then the boatswain went to the forward part of the ship, where most of the

men were standing, and spoke some words to them pretty emphatically, for in a very few minutes they had picked up, one a marline-spike, another a belaying pin, while the Lascars found their hatchets pleasant to handle. This was what things had come to aboard the good ship *Jessica*.

In the meantime nothing was spoken to the chief mate, who might surely have been taken into consideration. The fact of the skipper's being on deck seemed to alter the mate's position in the eyes of the men. The skipper, however, left the working of the ship to Charlie. It seemed that, like a man-of-war, the *Jessica* was to have a fighting captain and a navigating one, Charlie holding the latter office, and Butcher the former. The young man had not noticed Mr. Stephens on deck all this time, but soon he caught sight of him kneeling on

the deck, but not in any act of devotion, in the after part of the ship. As the boatswain and the skipper stood between him and Charlie he was partially concealed.

On, then, the good ship steered, altering not even a single point from her tack, though it was evident that her course would be interfered with. On she went, and the small steamer, flying the Colonial ensign, slowed her engines so as to be on the windward side of the ship. In a few minutes the paddles were stopped, and Mr. Stephens sat down under the windward bulwarks.

Upon the bridge and paddle-box of the steamer Charlie could see four or five men in the uniform of the dock police.

"Ship ahoy!" shouted one of the men from the paddle-box, just as the *Jessica* came plunging up. In an in-

stant Captain Butcher had mounted the raised grating astern of the wheel of his ship.

"Steamer ahoy!" he replied.

"Back your yards and lie-to until we come aboard," shouted the man.

"Back yourselves out of the way," Butcher replied. "We'll not be boarded by you or any other stranger."

"We have authority to board you," shouted the man. "This is the police boat."

"And this isn't."

"Come, sir, I command you to lie-to, or I'll board you by force."

"What's your business?" asked Captain Butcher.

"You have a man who calls himself Stephens aboard, and we have orders to bring him ashore."

"There's no person of that name aboard

this ship. Try the next that bears up," said Butcher, with a laugh.

"Then we'll board you by force," shouted the man.

"Try it, my lad," answered the skipper, brandishing the revolver he held before he stepped down.

Charlie now saw that he was not the object of the steamer's pursuit. He was made aware, too, that there was something far wrong in the whole affair, and that Stephens was at the bottom of the mischief, whatever it might prove. In addition, Charlie felt that in a very few minutes he would be in the midst of a lawless scuffle, for the steamer, that had dropped behind a hundred yards or so, was beginning to steam ahead once more. He could see the men grasping their weapons eagerly, while the eyes of the Lascars were glittering. On the steamer came,

being considerably to windward, but when not more than twenty yards away Butcher spoke a word to the man at the wheel of the *Jessica*, and the vessel was brought round a few points, as if to perplex the advancing enemy. Then came the voice of Stephens, shouting, "Lie down, all!" Down went all the heads aboard, and the next instant there was a thundering report of a cannon, a crashing sound, a cloud of smoke, and then a rattle of rifle shots that whistled through the rigging, followed by a defiant cheer from Butcher, Stephens, and the boatswain, who were standing far astern, looking out through the smoke, from which the ship had almost passed away. Charlie took a step aft as soon as he had recovered from his amazement, and then he saw that upon the deck a large ship's cannon had been mounted, made fast, and the muzzle projected through an open space made by

the removal of a couple of timbers for the taking in of cargo; and there, now far astern, lay the steamer, with one paddle-box stove in, and in a generally disabled condition. Upon the bridge remained the police superintendent, shaking his fist and roaring out unintelligible threats of vengeance.

Stephens was standing now, and the sole expression on his face was a contemptuous smile. He looked aft towards the steamer, from which the *Jessica* was fast speeding, and then he turned to the boatswain, saying:

"You can have the gun taken forward to its place again, and have the boards made square."

He then picked up the rifles and brought them into the second cabin, at the rear of the deck-house, nor did he reappear so long as Charlie remained on deck. The

skipper also retired. But the boatswain, having called some of the men to haul the gun forward, smiled, saying to Charlie and Phil, the latter of whom had been awakened from his sleep by the report :

"That's the way our governor squares his accounts. I guess the rats didn't board us!"

The truth of this statement could not be denied, but to Charlie and his comrade the transaction had another element in it than that of mere surprise. Two honest lads in the main, notwithstanding their shortcomings, accustomed to serve on board honest, if mismanaged, ships, the pair now found themselves involved in what they felt must be at the best a lawless venture, in which the lives of all concerned, whether friends or foes, were recklessly imperilled. If Charlie and Phil got free to tell their tale, who would ever believe them? Their cha-

racters would be irretrievably ruined, their certificates lost. In the meantime what deeds of disgrace, what acts of violence —which the two, so heavily outnumbered, must be powerless to restrain—might not the young men be made privy to? They seemed inextricably entangled in the toils which they had helped to weave for themselves. They stood together, looking astern to where the small steamer was now dwindling away to an indistinct speck; and though neither of them found a word to utter, yet each guessed pretty nearly what were the other's thoughts. And when they turned back to the deck, but one resolution had been made by them—a firm resolution, made in silence and without demonstration, to be faithful and true in heart to each other, however matters might turn out.

In half an hour afterwards the good ship

Jessica had passed out of the bay, and was running on a course to the north-east, when the first mate went to his cabin, giving orders to be called in four hours.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT was it that awakened the chief officer of the *Jessica* before the second mate had entered his cabin?

Charlie could not understand what it was. At first, before he became fully conscious, it seemed like the murmur of a soft wind through the shrouds, and as he lay in his bunk in this uncertainty of early waking, he thought that the sound shaped itself into a definite melody. Then he found himself lying fully awake, listening to a woman's voice singing a song that he had not heard for many years—since he was in his own home of long ago. He thought he had never heard so lovely

an air as that which sounded now, for it brought back to him soft regretful recollections of his home which remained in his mind after the melody that had caused them to arise had ceased.

While he was wondering if there was a steward aboard who had got a wife, Phil entered the cabin, which, it should have been mentioned, was at the forward part of the deck-house, Phil Carter's being at the opposite side, the companion stairs running between. The captain's cabin and Mr. Stephens's were, as has already been said, at the rear.

"Hallo, are you awake?" cried Phil. "I was just coming to call you for your watch on deck. The breeze has fallen, so I have had the top-sails re-set. Six knots is the speed, and we are out of sight of land, and I've had breakfast."

Charlie made the best of it and laughed.

"That is a capital report, my boy," he said. "Well, I'll just relieve you on deck. No more police boats, I hope."

"Not even the ghost of one, though the ghost of one might reasonably be supposed to follow us. But I've news for you. The fact is, there's a passenger aboard."

"A passenger?"

"Yes; a certain elderly gentleman, who is a friend of the governor's."

"Not the Jew?" cried Charlie.

"Oh, not at all—a stranger altogether. Patsy, the Irish steward, told me he was taking the voyage for his health."

"That who was taking the voyage? the steward or the gentleman?" asked Charlie.

"Oh, the gentleman, of course."

"Well, perhaps you can tell me if the steward has his wife aboard?"

"His wife? What on earth made you think of such a thing? No, he has not a

wife aboard. Isn't it rather rum that we shouldn't be told about this passenger long ago ? "

" I suppose it would seem queer if our governor were anyone else but Mr. Stephens. At any rate, I'll be on deck in a few minutes."

Phil then left the cabin, and Charlie dressed as quickly as is usual at sea, where there is no shaving to be done. He had scarcely gone aft to look at the course from the compass, before he met with this Irish steward, who was a tall, clumsy fellow, about thirty years of age. He had shock red hair, that had evidently long ago overcome all attempts at brushing or combing. He looked at Charlie for some moments, then slowly touched his forelock.

" And mabbe it wud be a-wantin' of some brikfist ye'd be, sir," he said.

" Well, if there's anything left I'd thank

you to bring it to me to my cabin," Charlie answered.

"It'll be there before ye, sir," said the man, slowly going towards the cabin.

Certainly not more than ten minutes had passed before Charlie had a capital meal before him.

"And so you are the steward, my good fellow?" he said.

"Ay, sir, that's me misforchune," replied the man. "It's meself that has to do work all the day round while the others slapes. Ah, but I wish I'd been born a sayman."

"It is very hard upon you indeed," said Charlie, laughing. "And now you will be doubly busy since there is a passenger aboard."

"I belave ye, sir. The brikfist is no sooner washed up than they call for their tiffin, and before that's off the table I'll be

bound to say they'll want dinner." And the man walked off, shaking his head most mournfully.

After making a hearty meal and feeling thereby refreshed, Charlie came on deck again, and went to give the man at the wheel a course a little more northerly. Then he noticed to the lee of the deck-house a couple of camp chairs with sloping cane backs. One of these was occupied by a handsome elderly gentleman, who was reading; the other was empty.

As Charlie passed he took off his cap respectfully, and the gentleman not only returned his salutation, but arose from his chair, and entered into conversation with him, introducing himself as the passenger.

"I trust we may have a prosperous voyage," said the gentleman. "It will be a long one, no doubt, but that will be all the better for myself, as it is for the sake

of the duration of the trip by sea that I am going to England by sail instead of steam."

"It will be a pretty long voyage, but I hope not a tedious one," Charlie replied.

"We have been out of sight of land for some time," said the passenger. "I should have liked to see the last of Australia. Does it lie directly astern?"

"Not exactly: a little further to the south is Cape Howe." He turned and pointed out the quarter. But when both were leaning over the bulwarks, looking across the waters, a light step sounded on the deck, and Charlie was startled by hearing a voice—a voice he knew—saying, "Here is the rug, papa."

Charlie started perceptibly before he turned round; the speaker deferred her start until she had seen his face. It was but a little start she gave, and in an instant after she was shaking him warmly by the

hand, her face flushed with pleasure and surprise, for the young lady was indeed the one whom he had saved from the insult of the miner in the Melbourne street.

Charlie himself was unable to utter a word of the happiness he felt—happiness not unmixed with fear—to find this girl aboard the vessel with Mr. Stephens and such a crew. In an instant the whole details of his dream while waiting in the old Jew's house on the previous evening came back to him. What could it all mean?

"Oh, papa," cried the girl to the gentleman beside her, who was certainly looking bewildered by her conduct towards Charlie, "Oh, papa, this is my protector of the day before yesterday, when that horrid drunken wretch would have insulted me—I told you of him."

"Is it possible?" said the gentleman.

"My good fellow, allow me to shake you by the hand, and offer you the thanks I feel. My daughter told me of your bravery." And he shook the young man's hand warmly.

Charlie had never before felt so embarrassed. He did not know what to say in reply, he could only mutter something about having done nothing worth repeating.

"You acted nobly, sir," said the gentleman, "and I cannot express my gratitude to you. My daughter told me the risk you ran, when not one of that cowardly crowd offered you any assistance. My daughter told me she thought you were a sailor, but I had no idea I should be so fortunate as to find you aboard this ship."

"You see," said the young lady, "though you were so ill-natured as to refuse to allow

me to bring you to papa, you are brought to him in spite of yourself."

Charlie thought he had never heard anything so pleasant as her laugh, as she held her father's hand and looked at himself. He felt that it would be impossible for him ever to forgive himself for having suffered that miner to escape with anything short of utter destruction.

On glancing round at this moment he saw Mr. Stephens standing at the door of his cabin, watching them with a curious expression upon his face—an expression of dissatisfaction that almost amounted to anger. He advanced to the party, saying:

"Pardon me, Mr. Longwood, but I never permit the officers of my ships when on duty to speak to passengers. Mr. Brown, you will, no doubt, be able to find something to look after in another part of the ship. Miss Longwood, tiffin is ready

now. Allow me to conduct you to the cabin."

"I am sorry you have such a rule as that you mention aboard your ship, Mr. Stephens," said Mr. Longwood. "Mr. Brown is a friend of mine, one to whom I am very much indebted."

"Indeed," said Stephens, with a little sneer. "Mr. Brown is fortunate. Now, if you please, we will go down to tiffin; it has been waiting too long already."

"Good morning, Mr. Brown; we must meet some time when you are not on duty," said the young lady, shaking hands with Charlie.

Mr. Longwood also shook hands with him, and then taking her father's arm and totally disregarding the presence of Stephens, the young lady went down to the cabin. Stephens' face was white with rage, as he cast but one look towards the

young man who had caused him to be so slighted. He did not speak a word, however, but only smiled as he walked away, leaving Charlie to reflect upon all that had happened.

And Charlie had certainly ample food for reflection. The thought that he was once more beside this girl, of whom he had been thinking ever since he had met her by chance two days before, was not wholly a thought of pleasure. He could not but consider how much had taken place to cause him to have—not to say a suspicion, but an absolute assurance with regard to the evil character of the owner of the ship. He could not any longer disguise from himself what he felt to be the bitter truth regarding this ship and its owner. Though he had previously done his best to silence the conviction which was forced upon him, he now felt that it was impossible for him

to do so, as he thought of this girl—this Miss Longwood being on board the ship. If there was any danger would she not be exposed to it, he thought; and his heart sank within him for a moment, when he reflected upon all he had seen and heard, from the moment he had entered the Jew's house until Stephens had fired the shot which had disabled the police steamer that had put out from Melbourne solely for his arrest. If Stephens, who was the owner of the vessel, was, to say the least, in request by the authorities — if he had felt his position so desperate as to make an attempt to escape by an act of what might have been murder, what was to be expected of the others who were aboard?

This was the reflection that somewhat detracted from the pleasure experienced at seeing once more the face that had not left his memory for a moment since he had

first beheld it. But then his heart became strengthened as he asked himself if it might not be that Providence had sent him aboard this ship to be the protector of this girl. The thought brought happiness again to him, and he was conscious that he was ready to go through any danger for her sake. Whatever might threaten them, he was ready to face all unflinchingly for her. He would rescue her, as he had done before. He grew very brave as he recalled her good and generous words to him, that had so angered Mr. Stephens, and he knew that nothing was too hard for him to do for her sake.

"By George!" said Phil Carter, coming up and interrupting his train of thought, "you have not been backward in making friends of the passengers. They shook hands with you as if they had known you all their lives."

"I knew the young lady," said Charlie; "that is to say, I met her by chance a few days ago."

"And you knew she was going as passenger in this ship? Oh, you smart chap."

"I never was so surprised as when I saw her here," replied Charlie, and then he told in a few words how he had first met with Miss Longwood in that Melbourne street.

"By George, you are in luck," cried Phil. "They will look on you as a regular hero. But take my advice, old man, and don't you become too confidential with the young lady so long as Mr. Stephens is your governor, and aboard the ship."

"Don't make an ass of yourself," said Charlie. "How could I ever become confidential with a lady who is infinitely above me in every way? But I should like to

know why you advise me to avoid doing so on account of Mr. Stephens."

"Why, because Patsy, the steward, tells me he believes the governor means to go in for her himself."

"Then you may tell your friend Patsy that he is too fond of talking about things that don't concern him," said Charlie, walking away sternly.

Phil watched him, and then began to laugh gently as he made the single remark, "To think that Charlie should be a gone coon over a girl like that. What an ass he is!"

CHAPTER X.

In the evening Mr. Stephens came up to Charlie with anything but a smiling countenance.

"I want to speak a few words with you." he said. "You are, as you are probably aware, to dine in the cabin at the same table as ourselves—the passengers and myself; but I wish to tell you at once, in order to prevent anything unpleasant afterwards, that I will not permit you to behave in the cabin as if you were among your equals. You must recollect your position; you are but a seaman; Mr. Longwood is a gentleman."

"I hope it is not impossible that one may be both a seaman and a gentleman,

sir; or even a shipowner and a gentleman," remarked Charlie.

"Now, look you here, my good fellow," said the other angrily: "I give you warning that if you talk to the passengers as though you were on a level with them you will find yourself most unpleasantly situated indeed, that is all."

Charlie did not make any reply; he saw that Mr. Stephens was piqued at the manner in which Mr. Longwood and his daughter had spoken to him in the morning, and he did not feel anything but glad that Stephens had laid himself out to be his enemy.

He went down to dinner with Phil, and found the captain already seated at the table. The passengers' cabins were evidently situated on each side of the saloon. Miss Longwood's next to her father's, and that of her maid—a young girl, who was very sea-sick—on the opposite side.

Mr. Stephens sat at the top of the table, Charlie being placed between the captain and Phil Carter. But however mindful the chief officer might have been of the injunction of the owner, he had certainly no chance of obeying it, without being grossly impolite, for he had no sooner seated himself than Mr. Longwood addressed him and continued asking him questions as long as the dinner lasted. And, what was worse still, the young lady, instead of turning to Mr. Stephens, as she might have done, gave all her attention to what her father and Charlie were talking about, and wished for more than one piece of information herself. The result was that, altogether against his own will, Charlie monopolized the conversation at the table; and when they rose he saw that Mr. Stephens was still more enraged than he had been in the morning; and that he should have been somewhat

annoyed was no more than might have been expected. When the owner of a good ship finds himself made a secondary person in his own cabin, while one of the men to whom he pays so much money a month takes the first place, it can hardly be expected that he will feel kindly towards that man.

Mr. Stephens, however, did not speak a word to Charlie during the remainder of the evening; nor did Charlie volunteer a friendly chat with Mr. Stephens.

That night the two mates divided the watches on deck, for it did not seem that the skipper meant to put in an appearance. He had retired to his cabin after dinner, and every few minutes, until darkness had set in, there was heard the clink of glasses from the room, so that it was generally understood the good commander of the *Jessica* was keeping watch over a bottle of rum. The

night, however, passed, and the breeze continued to blow as fairly as before, the ship running eight and nine knots.

The next day, when Charlie went on deck, he saw Mr. Stephens sitting on the chair that Mr. Longwood had occupied, by the side of the young lady, to whom he was chatting agreeably—certainly incessantly. The young man felt disgusted at the sight. He enquired of the steward why Mr. Longwood did not come on deck, and he learned that that gentleman was unwell and confined to his cabin.

When the dinner time came round Charlie could not avoid feeling that Mr. Stephens had had his hour with the young lady on deck; but now it would be different, the scene at the table on the previous day would be repeated—she would talk with him, while Stephens should have to sit by neglected. But what was Charlie's amazement

[illegible]

could their friendship be worth when they were ready to throw him over at the first word of calumny that was uttered against him, he asked himself. Yes, he would show himself superior to their friendship; but, at the same time, he would be revenged upon the man who had spoken against him.

Thus two more days passed, and the *Jessica*, by the aid of prosperous winds, was now far upon her way, and passing the northern point of New Zealand. The homeward course from Australia is by the east, not, as the Irishman explained it, because it is down hill in this direction, but that the winds blowing from the south-east are more to be trusted for steadiness than the variable breezes of the Indian Ocean. Charlie had got plenty to do in the navigating of the ship these days, for certainly Mr. Stephens had not exaggerated in the least when he told Charlie that he would be

entrusted with the vessel. He felt that he was being far too much trusted. He would not have considered himself at all degraded if the skipper had come on deck to relieve him on watch; but it really seemed as if the skipper was only the fighting commander, for he never once appeared in Charlie's sight out of his cabin.

And still for ten days the *Jessica* pursued her course, the chief officer taking his observations of the sun every noon and marking the position upon the chart. But he did not confine his observations to the heavenly bodies; there were several earthly bodies whose movements he marked with particular care. He did not fail to notice, for instance, that every day Mr. Stephens sat with Miss Longwood, and that their conversations became longer in duration. Charlie became proportionately bitter in his way of thinking, and more disagreeable to

his companion, Phil Carter; from which Phil drew his own inferences.

"Poor Charlie!" he said, "he has made a pretty fool of himself indeed—letting his mind run upon that girl in a romantic fashion, as if all fashionable girls were not the same—heartless and mercenary. He sees how the governor is going in for her hot and heavy these days, and so he lets himself be put about. Poor Charlie!"

And surely enough Charlie was very much put about by all that he saw. How could it be possible, he thought, that this beautiful and gentle-natured girl should become a prey to that man, who was a scoundrel and perhaps a murderer—for if he were not one or other, why should the police boat have been at the trouble of pursuing him? Yes, nothing was too bad for Charlie to believe him to be now that he monopolized the society of Miss Longwood.

One evening, however, Charlie noticed so much as caused him to modify, if not altogether to alter the opinion he had formed in his haste of the young lady; though by no means to change the conclusion he had arrived at regarding Mr. Stephens. The sun had just set when the chief mate came out of his cabin for his watch on deck. He stood looking over the side, amidships, until the brief twilight had set in. The deck seemed quite deserted, but when he chanced to look aft, he saw by the side of the deck-house Miss Longwood and Mr. Stephens, sitting together. Stephens was evidently talking to the lady very earnestly, for he clasped his hands, and looked into her face; then he attempted to seize one of her hands, but the instant that she felt his touch, as it seemed, she started up, and stood for a few moments with her head erect, looking down

upon him; then she gave a single indignant motion with her hand, and walked over to the companion, by which she descended to the cabin below, leaving him still seated by the side of the deck-house. Charlie, watching him, saw him clench his fingers, and heard the oath he muttered through his set teeth.

"Thank heaven!" murmured the young man. "Thank heaven! she has proved that she is aware of his true character!"

Turning round suddenly, as Stephens rose from his place and went into his own cabin at the rear of the deck-house, Charlie also saw a dark figure get up from where it had been crouching in the shadow of the main-mast. He saw that it was the boatswain, who had also been a silent observer of the scene aft, and it struck him as being strange that this man, of all others, should be interested in the actions of the owner of

the ship. What could it mean, Charlie asked himself; but he had not arrived at a satisfactory conclusion before his midnight watch was ended, and he had gone into his cabin to try and court some of the sleep he needed to come to him.

The next day he saw Mr. Stephens walking as usual upon the deck, apparently in expectation that Miss Longwood would behave as usual, and occupy the camp-chair that now lay folded by the side of the deck-house. But it seemed that in this respect Mr. Stephens was doomed to suffer disappointment, for the young lady did not appear during the entire morning, and it was plain that his disappointment was beginning to tell upon Mr. Stephens. He turned into the captain's cabin, and from that apartment there issued the sounds of very loud conversation of an argumentative character. It would have been hard to

believe that the personages then in occupation were living like brothers together. The oaths that found their way into the air, through the crevices of the door, were of the most pronounced type. The skipper's voice seemed steadied by his week of continuous drinking, for he was quite as emphatic in his tones as his visitor.

Charlie could not, of course, understand, from the mere outline of oaths, what was the point under such violent discussion; but when the bell sounded for dinner, the skipper, much to his surprise, came out of his cabin and saluted him. The man's face was terribly red, even beyond what Charlie had seen it before, and his walk was not exactly of military erectness. He was, however, smiling blandly, and he addressed Charlie at once, no one else being visible on the after part of the deck.

"Ah! young 'un, how are you?" he

said. "How are you sailing the tub, eh? Not a bad sort of tub when you come to know her. She's not like some people—I don't say any names, mind you; no, no, I'm too discreet for that, bless you—some people that you don't know for a considerable time, and when you do come to know them you don't want to have anything to say to them. Do you mind when I asked you in old Judas's—the Jew at Melbourne—if you knew the governor, you said, of course, that you knew him? I told you that you didn't, but that you should. Well, are you getting to know him?"

"I think I am, sir," Charlie replied. "I think I may safely say now that I know him."

Then the skipper burst into one of his old laughs, and it was some moments before he could articulate the words, "You said so before; you said you knew him;

lor' bless you, you have a lot to learn yet, before you can say you know him. He didn't know me quite until to-day; but we had a talk together; that opened his eyes a bit. He knows me now."

"I don't understand you," said Charlie.

"I didn't expect that you would," the other replied. "But the dinner's ready, and I'm ordered by the governor to be present. Come along."

They both went down together, and found Mr. Stephens at the head of the table, as usual. But, of the passengers, Mr. Longwood only was present. In a very short time, before Patsy had brought on the soup, Miss Longwood appeared, and bowed to Mr. Stephens and Charlie. She seemed surprised to see Captain Butcher.

"I was so sorry to hear that you were unwell, Captain. I hope you are now better," she said.

"Thank you, miss, I'm—soberer," he answered, avoiding compromising himself by expressing an opinion as to the superiority of the condition of sobriety.

The conversation to-day was chiefly between Mr. Longwood and the skipper, and it was observable that the young lady never interchanged a word with Stephens. This was exceedingly gratifying to the chief mate, and he trusted that the breach which evidently was between them might be widened instead of filled up.

To his great surprise and disgust, however, when Miss Longwood went on deck, and took her seat aft, waiting for her father to join her, he saw Mr. Stephens walk slowly up to her and speak a few words. Then Miss Longwood rose and bowed gently, giving him her hand, which he pressed for a moment and dropped. Raising his hat next, he bowed low and walked

round to his own cabin before Mr. Longwood had come up from the saloon to sit beside his daughter.

Charlie was certainly thrown back into his former state of dissatisfaction with everybody and everything by what he had seen. It was evident that Mr. Stephens had said something on the previous evening that had offended Miss Longwood, but on his having apologized now, she had been gracious enough to forgive him. This was quite a grievance to the young man. He felt that it would be impossible for him ever to forgive her for forgiving Stephens. No one could have become more uncharitably inclined than this young man.

The ship was gliding along through rippling seas, the wind being just sufficient to fill her sails. It was Charlie's watch on deck, but there was really no duty for him to perform. He stood at his favourite part

of the bulwarks amidships, and looked over the side across the waters to where the sun was almost touching the horizon, bringing the warm day to its close. In spite of his years of rough life at sea, he still retained some fondness for this hour of sunset and twilight. It was this one hour that linked him with the things of the past, and he loved to stand, as he was now standing, as the sun quickly sank down behind the far-off horizon that seemed like the rim of a wall of water.

Everything was quiet on earth and in heaven. The languid motion of the ship seemed even boisterous in this ocean of rest. The deck was deserted by this time, he saw, for Mr. Longwood was again feeling unwell, and had descended with his daughter; so there, in this hour of soft twilight, Charlie stood, dreaming his dreams and thinking his thoughts, until the rosy

west had darkened into blue again, and in the east a few stars were trembling.

Gradually he became aware of the sound of singing near him. The voice did not come suddenly, but so gently it seemed to be a part of the delicate shadowy light of the hour. It was some moments before he recognised the song as that which he had heard upon his first awakening aboard the ship. He listened to it now as he had listened to it then, and the warm tears were forced into his eyes as all the old better memories of his forsaken home returned to him.

When the music of the song had ceased there came a voice of musical speech, sweet as the melody.

"I fear," said the voice of Miss Longwood, "I fear that you are sad. I have noticed you more than once, and I could not refrain from speaking to you now."

He turned, and looked into her face for a moment. "Could you not, Miss Longwood? You resisted the temptation for the past ten days. I may remind you," he said, with a little touch of bitterness.

She did not go away, as she might reasonably have done on being spoken to in this tone. She looked at him without the least expression of reproach, and there was nothing but pity in her voice as she said, gently, "Do not be despondent, Mr. Brown. You are young yet, and I know you are brave. It is not too late for you to make a fresh start in life. The past should be forgotten."

He stared at her. "Why should the past be forgotten, Miss Longwood? There is nothing in my past life that I want to forget."

Then she looked down, saying gently,

"Mr. Brown, I should tell you that I know—all. That is why I thought I should speak to you now. I am sure you were not altogether to blame."

"To blame, Miss Longwood? What can you mean? Indeed I do not understand to what you allude."

"I heard all about your unhappiness and your—your—punishment. Never mind, it must be painful for you to dwell on it; forgive me for alluding to the past."

"Your words are a mystery to me, Miss Longwood," he said. "Nothing in the past—unless my boyish folly and self-willed stupidity—is painful for me to think about. I might tell anyone in the world of every action I ever did since I was born. If I did desert my ship—well, I admit that was wrong; but I certainly received gross provocation."

"I thought I might have been frank

with you," said the young lady, "but I find it cannot be."

"Stay, Miss Longwood," he cried, as she turned, "you have hinted at something disgraceful being a part of my life; who told you anything of me?"

"You know who was the only one able to tell me all about you—Mr. Stephens."

"And you believed him when he told you that I had ever disgraced myself? You believed that man who is a robber, and perhaps a murderer—you believed him and cast me aside as unworthy of notice solely on his evidence? How could you do that? I thought you were all that was good and pure and holy; but now—oh, my God! to think you should be under the influence of that liar and scoundrel!"

"Mr. Brown, you forget yourself," she said, quietly. "I came to you thinking that perhaps I could be of some service

to you as a friend; I find I have been mistaken."

She had turned, and was in the act of moving away when he made a step forward, and stood in front of her.

"Yes, you have been mistaken, Miss Longwood," he cried. "You have been mistaken in me. You will acknowledge it some day. But hear me now when I swear to you by heaven that I have never done anything—unless in deserting my ship—that I should blush to have repeated. Go, now, and believe me or not, as you think fit."

She did not go away, but he turned about and walked hastily up the deck, leaving her alone.

"Can it be possible that my suspicions are about to be proved too correct?" said the girl to herself, as she watched Charlie pass away. "Good heavens! have we

both been mistaken in that man? No, no, it cannot be so! the thought is too terrible."

She clasped her hands, and stood for a long time in the place where Charlie had been standing. Beneath her the broad blue waters stretched far and wide on to the sky, and above her were the myriad stars of the rich night, shining with all the splendour of the constellations of the southern tropics. In the midst of the beauties of this night she stood there lost in thought.

CHAPTER XI.

THE first mate of the *Jessica* passed his watch on deck vowing vengeance upon the man that had so traduced him to the young lady as to cause her to treat him as she had done. Stephens had told her some falsehood that she had believed, and all her former friendliness towards Charlie had turned to pity, which was worse to him to bear than a direct slight. He could bear anything but her pity, he said to himself a thousand times as he stood upon the silent deck, and a thousand times he swore, with the passionate thought of his wrong burning within him, to be revenged upon Stephens. But when he began to think upon the position he occupied aboard this

ship with respect to Stephens, despair of ever being able to keep this vow of his came upon him. He felt that, indeed, he could do nothing. If that girl, whom he had so loved, could bring herself to believe what Stephens had said, surely it would be better for him to resolve never to think about her again. This resolution he adopted; and the manner in which he carried it out was this: he thought of her all the night, nor did he leave off thinking of her when he reached his cabin at midnight, and tumbled into his bunk.

He lay awake until the four bells had been struck, and he had begun to despair of falling asleep, when he gave a start, becoming aware of the sound of a footstep upon the deck just outside his cabin. If it had been an ordinary footstep he would not have thought anything of it, but this was a soft, cat-like, muffled step, and so he was

led to suspect someone was there who wished to be unheard.

Charlie sat up in his bunk and listened till the soft footfalls passed away astern. He then heard distinctly three short taps upon the door of Mr. Stephens' cabin, which, being also a portion of the deck-house, was separated from his own but by a partition. In another moment he heard the door open stealthily, and there came the subdued murmur of two voices.

Charlie could not understand the meaning of this, but not wishing that the stealthiness should be altogether one-sided, he quietly got out of his bunk and opened his door; then he could hear distinctly the words that were spoken at the other side of the deck-house, and he could even be certain from the tones that it was the boatswain and Mr. Stephens who were talking together.

The stealth of the proceedings Charlie felt to be a deliberate challenge to his curiosity. But if his powers of observation were to be defied he would accept the challenge; not a word should escape him.

"Well, my jolly pal," came the whispered voice of the boatswain to the owner of the vessel; "well, old pal, how do you feel to-night? It's long since we had a chat face to face. I hope you haven't forgotten the old times."

"Hush!" whispered Stephens. "They will be able to hear you all over the ship. What the deuce do you want, coming to me in this way? If you were seen, everything would be lost."

"Oh, you're mighty funky, now that you've got respectable, Ned. You were once as bold as the rest of us."

"Tell me what brought you aft, if you don't want me to put you over the side,"

said Stephens, savagely, but no louder than a whisper.

Charlie heard the other give a little laugh.

"What, Gentleman Ned take to rough dealing!" he said, sarcastically. "No, no, my pal! I can't think that likely; at least, not where so old and true a friend as myself is concerned. But I'll tell you what I want to know. I want to know your plans now. What's your little game with the girl?"

"Hush!" whispered Stephens. "That fool of a mate is watching us day by day like a lynx. Are you sure his door is closed?"

In a second Charlie's head was withdrawn, and his door tightly closed. He heard Stephens come round outside to make certain there were no listeners. When he ventured to open his door again the voices

were so far away, at the other side of the deck-house, he could not distinguish a word.

He looked about for a way that might allow of his hearing the remainder of the conversation. He knew he dared not creep around the deck-house, for fear of discovery; but the roof of the wooden structure—could he not hear all from a position there?

He put his foot cautiously up to the handle of his own cabin door, and climbed almost without a sound to the flat roof. A tarpaulin lay there, and he crawled underneath this shelter across the roof until he was just above the place where the two men were talking; and though he had of course lost a good deal of what they had said, something still remained for him to hear.

"Don't think that what I've told you isn't the truth," Stephens whispered to the

boatswain. "I'm not such a fool as to try and take in you, or anybody else that's in the same boat with me."

"I don't think you're quite a fool; but still it's best to know that all's square," replied the other. "It's to be share and share alike for all of us, mind you. As for the girl, we'll make you a present of her—a sort of bonus for you as director-general of our own limited liability company; but, mind you, there must be no trying to hoodwink us, or we'll bust up, like any other company. It would be very nice to get a hold of the young woman respectably, I know, and so cut all your former pals; but, mind you, old boy, we'll have nothing like that."

"Curse you and your crew! I begin to wish I had never seen you," said Stephens, through his set teeth.

"Now don't you get angry about nothing.

We'll remain as good friends as ever if you behave on the square."

"And don't you know I will behave on the square? I've no chance of doing anything else. When the time comes I'll take decisive action, and you will have share and share alike of the cash and of the ship too, if we can sell her. If we are obliged to put a match to the barrel of powder that I've provided for an extremity, there will be no talk of sharing then. Now, don't stand here any longer, or you'll have the passengers and all the ship's company around us."

"I'll go, my hearty boy, I'll go now that I have delivered myself of what I had got to say. We'll have no mistakes—that's all I've to tell you now. And don't think you'll make yourself square at our expense."

"You were always a fool, and you are

showing yourself as bad as ever," said Stephens. "Don't I tell you we're all in the same boat?"

"I know we are; but don't you be the first to forget it. Good-night, my pal. We'll have another chat some of these nights."

Charlie heard the boatswain walk gently away; still Stephens did not move, but stood watching the other, and Charlie heard him say to himself in a whisper, "Good-night, my pal, good-night. Clever as you are, I'll manage to throw some dust in your eyes—gold dust, perhaps. You're clever, but superficial; while I—ah, well, never mind."

Charlie heard him close his cabin door before he ventured to descend from his very uncomfortable position on the roof of the deck-house. He did so at last, however, and regained his cabin noiselessly.

It is scarcely to be wondered at that the chief mate of the *Jessica* did not at once go to sleep after he had turned into his bunk. What he had heard and observed this night, beneath the glowing constellations of the south, caused him to remain awake for a considerable time. What was it that he had heard? What did it all mean? It was some time before he could separate the sentences he had overheard, and draw any deduction from them. He had heard the man, who, as owner of the ship, had appointed him chief officer, addressed by the boatswain in a manner not merely of familiarity, but of slighting familiarity: the boatswain had called the owner of the ship by the title of "pal," and had spoken threateningly; yet the owner had been even submissive to the other's threatenings, and had condescended to offer explanations to him.

This seemed very extraordinary to the chief officer; but then, what meaning remained to be drawn from the words they had spoken together? It must be confessed that, as the young man reflected upon what he had heard, his heart sank within him. He could only make fearful guesses as to the true import of the conversation between the two men. He shuddered, feeling that a terrible danger was hanging over her—for his thoughts and apprehensions were for Miss Longwood, first of all. They had talked of gold—Whose was the gold? They had talked of disposing of a certain girl—Who was the girl?

These were terrible questions, suggested to him by what he had heard; and it is scarcely to be wondered at that, when the second mate came into his cabin to awaken him for his watch on deck, he was still sleepless, for he had arrived at no conclusion

as to the nature of the danger that threatened them, or the means by which it could be averted. All he knew for certain was that his worst suspicions regarding this man, who called himself Stephens, were well founded.

The first impulse of the young man, the next day, was to confront Stephens, and charge him with his treachery, and with all manner of crimes of which he believed him guilty. But when he had time for reflection he remembered that if Mr. Stephens should request him to name any act of treachery for which he was responsible, there would be more than a considerable amount of difficulty in satisfactorily complying with the request. And if Mr. Stephens should then request the crew, headed by the boatswain, to put irons on their chief officer—nay, to throw their chief officer overboard, this request would be

complied with in a very short space of time. These considerations caused him to resolve to restrain his natural impulses. He would not confront Mr. Stephens while such odds were against him. He could only wait patiently, and watch his opportunity. All things come to those who wait, he had heard more than once, and surely his opportunity would come.

Still it was hard for him to see Stephens walking near where Miss Longwood sat with her father, and to hear him now and again make some remark while passing them, to which they answered pleasantly. Charlie would have liked to seize this man by the throat, and let the next five minutes decide all; however, he restrained himself, and even at dinner, when his enemy was pleasanter company than ever to the passengers, the young man was able to guard himself. He would not be such a fool as

to show that he suspected anything; he would be as cunning as Stephens himself.

When the evening drew on, Charlie saw Mr. Longwood come on deck alone and light a cigar. But he had not taken many puffs before he walked up to where Charlie was standing, and passed a few general remarks regarding the voyage. Looking round the deck then, as if to make sure that they were not observed, the gentleman spoke more seriously to Charlie.

"Mr. Brown," he said, gently, "you will, I am sure, pardon the question I am about to ask you. I have no right to put it to you, I know, but I assure you I do not do so frivolously."

"Any question you may ask me, I shall consider the opposite to frivolous, sir."

"May I ask you, then, if you were ever convicted of any crime?" said Mr. Longwood.

The young man's cheeks blazed with indignation, and his hands were clenched.

"If anyone else had asked me such a question, I should take it as an insult never to be forgiven," he said, with trembling lips. "But I will answer—thank God I can answer you with a clear conscience, looking you in the face. I swear to you that I never was even charged with an offence. I swear to you that I never in all my life committed an offence against the law, with the exception of running away from my last ship. As for committing any crime—well, my answer is that I can look you in the face as I do now."

Mr. Longwood returned the young man's steadfast gaze.

"I knew it, my lad," he said, stretching out his hand. "I knew all along that it was impossible you could ever have been the rascal you were painted to us. We

have been shamefully deceived, and I ask your pardon."

"You find out now that you have been deceived; I need not ask you by whom," said Charlie.

"You know it was by Mr. Stephens. But what object could he have had in maligning you? He told us he had taken you in charity aboard his vessel, so soon as you had been released from your period of transportation, imposed for some crime committed in England. He told us, also, that he believed, even in the short interval after your release, you had been at your old tricks, since the *Jessica* was followed by the police steamer. He did not choose to give you up, and even misled the police by firing the old cannon, the report of which so startled my daughter and myself within the first few hours of our having set sail upon this voyage."

"Liar and scoundrel that he is!" cried Charlie, almost beside himself with passion. "But I shall watch for my opportunity, and the first crime I shall commit will be his destruction."

"Hush, hush; do not talk in this wild fashion," said Mr. Longwood. "Tell me what you know of this man."

"I know nothing, except that he engaged me as mate of this ship in a boarding-house in Melbourne. And you, sir, how long have you been acquainted with him?"

"I met him for the first time only a week before we came aboard this ship," answered Mr. Longwood, hastily.

"Good heavens!" cried Charlie. "Do you mean to tell me that he was not an old friend of yours? The only thing that I could not reconcile with my suspicions of him was the fact of his being a friend of yours."

"I tell you, I met him only a week before we sailed," replied Mr. Longwood. "I made his acquaintance at the hotel where I was staying; as he was courteous and friendly, I mentioned to him that I was at the point of setting out for England, and I even told him the circumstances of my departure—that I had a large quantity of bullion which I was anxious to ship with myself."

Charlie gave another start, as the recollection of what he had heard the previous night, about sharing a certain sum of gold, flashed across his memory. Could it be possible it was to Mr. Longwood's gold the boatswain had referred?

"And you shipped it with Stephens?" he asked quickly, as Mr. Longwood paused.

"You shall hear. When I told him of my anxiety, he said nothing, except that it

was necessary to be very careful about such matters. But the next day he came to me, saying, in a pleasant way, that perhaps I had not known, when I had told him all I did, that he himself was a shipowner, and that he had a fine vessel ready for sea. I was surprised to hear this, and assured him I had no idea that he should take anything I had said as a suggestion to him, for I was quite unaware of his having a ship. He then laughed quietly, and begged me not to make any apology, and added that he would be happy to have the cabin fitted up to accommodate my daughter and myself for the voyage, if, after visiting the ship, I should think it suitable. Such a chance of getting the long sea voyage my doctors had ordered me was not to be picked up every day; so, after going down to the wharf with him, and finding this ship an excellent one in every

way, I agreed with him for a certain sum—very little more than the ordinary cost of a passage—to bring us to England. He then told me he thought it would be better for me to keep my departure a secret, considering the bullion I was to take with me. Of course I saw the force of his remarks, and I did not tell even my doctor by what ship I was leaving."

Charlie was thunderstruck at all he heard. He looked mutely into Mr. Longwood's face, and it was some moments before he could stammer, "And the gold—it is shipped of course?"

"It is shipped. Nine iron boxes are stowed in the cabin under the table," said Mr. Longwood, with an odd smile.

"Great heavens!" said Charlie. "The whole matter is too perplexing to be understood at once. I do not know what it means."

"Nor do I," said Mr. Longwood. "I fear we may be in danger, but I beseech of you do not give a hint to this effect to my daughter. Let her, at least, be spared this apprehension. She has suffered enough already. That man dared to make proposals of marriage to her a few days ago, but he was repulsed in a manner that will cause him to think twice before he touches on the subject again."

"The ruffian!" cried Charlie. "Does he fancy his insults will be allowed to pass without notice? By heavens! I will make him pay dearly for them all."

"Hush," whispered the other to this blusterer. "Do you not see a figure standing far aft?"

Charlie glanced in the direction indicated, and saw, standing near the wheel, the figure of the man of whom they were talking, observing them closely. It was time

now—more than time—for them to part, and they did so without a word.

It will be gathered, from the conversation just rehearsed, that the chief officer of the *Jessica* was not without a subject for reflection this night, as well as the previous night.

CHAPTER XII.

THE fair weather and favourable winds, that had hitherto made the voyage of the ship a prosperous one, showed signs the next day of coming to an end. The barometer, Charlie saw, had fallen considerably during the night, and the breeze had now strengthened into a gale. The ripples became waves with white foaming crests, and the fair blue of the sky was no longer seen, except after intervals of drifting clouds.

Early in the day Charlie had ordered sail to be shortened, and at his command the royals and skysails were taken in, so that the ship rode easily until the afternoon. By that time, however, the mercury had fallen so low, and the sky was so dark,

that he thought it advisable to prepare for the worst and have the lower sails reefed: so he gave orders to have the main-top-gallants so shortened, that even if the full gale had become a storm there would have been no occasion to take in anything more.

The captain had all this time not appeared upon the deck, but Mr. Stephens did not seem to make any objection to the commands of the mate being carried out. At sunset there was apparently a lull in the wind, as there very frequently is in these latitudes. The orb went down behind a large bank of black clouds, through the great ragged rifts of which its rays were sent wildly flashing up through the sky in brazen lurid columns, that were also reflected in the sea for miles around. For this quarter of an hour the wind fell away, and the ship might easily have carried all sail. Then there was a sudden heavy squall, with rain,

that would certainly have carried away the skysails if they had been set; but this was succeeded by another period of calm, during which Mr. Stephens was seen to go into the captain's cabin. In a few minutes the skipper appeared upon deck, without his coat, and with his hair tossed, as if he had just been awakened from a sleep. His face was a darker copper colour than ever—in comparison with its hue, the sun, that had showed its disc large and lurid just before its descent, would have seemed pale.

The skipper held on by the bulwarks aft while he looked aloft. In another instant he had burst into a loud hoarse laugh, which he continued for a considerable time. Charlie was standing near him, and it must be confessed his face also became red, though scarcely of so fiery a hue as the skipper's.

"Bless my soul!" cried Butcher, as soon as he could make an attempt at articulation.

"Bless my soul! what has the boy been doing? what is the matter, that the ship should be made to ride under bare poles?"

"The barometer has been falling rather quickly, sir, and we have had a few severe squalls," said Charlie.

"Oh, curse the barometer!" cried the skipper. "There's no more wind than would drive a smack under full sail. Hang it! what do you mean by taking command of my ship if you don't know the difference between a breeze and a gale?"

"But there has already been a squall, sir."

"Boatswain ahoy!" shouted the skipper, turning his back on Charlie. The boatswain came up. "Send hands aloft to shake out the main-top-gallants and the mizzen-royal."

"We've just had them taken in, sir," said the boatswain.

The skipper yelled out an oath, ordering

him to get aloft or to go a considerable distance in the opposite direction. Of the two alternatives the man chose the less difficult to perform.

"Hands aloft, shake out the mizzen-royal!" he shouted, and a dozen men looked up and, with many grumblings and a good number of strong expressions, prepared to get aloft. In a short time Charlie had the satisfaction of seeing his late orders countermanded in a most satisfactory manner.

But before the mizzen-royal was shaken out, the effect of the wind upon the other sails that were set was apparent. The gale had returned with its former force with the dimness of the twilight, and the masts began to creak with every gust that came. There was too much sail on the ship now, though undoubtedly there had been too little previously. But the skipper gave no sign, and the boatswain and his men were soon at

the mizzen-royal, the ship all the while plunging through the heavy surging waves that clashed and clamoured against her sides and flashed over her bowsprit.

The sails had been unfurled and shaken out, and the yards were about to be hauled round, when a squall struck the ship, causing her to plunge forward heavily under the pressure of her canvas, and the sailors aloft had to hold on by the yards to save themselves. Surely, Charlie thought, the skipper will countermand his order. But no, he only shouted up to know what the men meant by not squaring away. The sailors were just hauling the yard over when Charlie saw another heavy squall coming across the water. The ship could not bear it, he knew, and he shouted to let go the halyards. The men who were standing by paused between the orders, and in that pause down swooped the wind upon the vessel. Over

the ship heeled—over until the ports of the lee side were in the water—over until a sharp quick snap and a crash came—then a cry, and a dark mass fell from the yard into the dark water beneath.

Before the words "Man overboard!" were shouted, Charlie knew what had happened: the mizzen-top-mast had snapped right off, and had knocked a man from the yard into the water.

"Down helm! Brace aback the after-yards! man long-boat!" he shouted as he took off his coat. The men ran to the halyards. Stephens appeared on deck, and in another instant Charlie had sprung from the bulwarks into the water that curled and eddied in the wake of the ship.

What a sensation that was to him, when the water closed over his head as he plunged into its black depths, and when he rose to take breath between the waves!

The spray was dashed wildly in his face in long lines like the lashes of a whip, and when he extended his arms, striking out over the crest of a wave, he sank into the hollow until he seemed to be swallowed in the liquid cavern. This was, however, only at first, for soon he could look about him and allow himself to rise upon the brow of each large wave instead of striking through it.

The sea appeared very dark in that short hour of twilight, and when the young man turned round to take a bearing of the ship, that he might know what direction to swim, she seemed to be already miles from him, and out upon the horizon. His heart sank within him, but he looked away from the ship: it was not to the ship he was to swim, it was in the opposite track that his course lay. He struck out vigorously through the waves whither he fancied the man must have fallen.

On still he laboured until it seemed to him that he had already been long hours in the water. But what a search it was for this man through the vast circle of ocean! How would it be possible for him ever to find the body? and, if he should find it, how would it be possible for the ship to discover them? Still he felt strength in him, and still he struck out with all that strength.

But what a wild enterprise he was engaged in, he felt again, as he fought the waves as though they were his enemies interposing themselves between him and the object of his love. He dared not look behind him to see where the ship was, but he pressed forward and forward until—rising on the brow of a gigantic wave—he saw, in the hollow beneath him, a black mass—a face just beneath the surface of the dark water. Down that wave-hill he plunged, and

made such a desperate clutch at the thing before him that he sank with it beneath the next rolling wave. It did not matter; in another instant he was supporting with one hand the head of the man clear of the water, he himself swimming with the other hand.

He held the drowning man so unnecessarily high that he soon became exhausted, and then it struck him it would be easier if the man could be turned on his back and allowed to float. He slackened his hold, and the next wave reversed the body and swept the straggling hair from the face. The moment Charlie's eyes fell on that face he started, recognising it to be the boatswain's. Then the truth flashed across his mind: he had leaped overboard to save the man who was in the ship for the destruction of all that was dear to Charlie. There the body swayed with the swaying waters, helpless—for the blow from the falling top-mast had

stunned the sailor—and here was the man against whose happiness he was leagued, spending all the force that remained in him in an endeavour to keep the boatswain's mouth from drinking in the suffocating water.

Terrible thoughts and suggestions came to Charlie Barton at that instant. A demon voice whispered in his ear, "He has been plotting against you and those you love; slacken your hold and his crimes are at an end for ever." For an instant Charlie's hand dropped—but only for a single instant. He crushed out the one base thought, and more resolutely than ever he grasped the neck of the boatswain's jersey, and supported him as if he had been a brother instead of a deadly enemy.

And thus for a space of time that seemed hours to the young man, but which was in reality only some minutes, he upheld his burden

while the cold waters streamed over him, half choking him at times, and again bearing him along as if struggling to separate him from the thing he was holding. He felt his strength waning—its continuance would not be a matter of many minutes now. And then the terrible thought came to him telling him that he had thrown his life away unworthily. He had not done his duty. Instead of waiting to be the protector of Miss Longwood, and to shield her from the danger which surrounded her, he had been mad enough to risk the life he had sworn to devote to her. Now that he was gone would not the man who called himself Stephens be able to succeed in his designs? Would not the girl, for whom his life were well given, be now in the power of that man whom he believed to be an unscrupulous villain?

These thoughts were maddening to him.

Under their influence the poor wretch shook, in all the fierceness of rage and bitterness, the helpless form that he held. He shook it in frenzy repeatedly, for his reason was giving way, under the exhaustion of swimming with the burden he had to support. Still he held on to that man with all the strength that remained to him; his anger did not make him let go.

He forgot to look for the ship—indeed, he had no thought of it, except at the first. He began to fancy strange things in the dimness. It seemed to him that he was once more back in the old places that he had forsaken years ago. He was once more swimming with his companions in the river that ran at the foot of his father's garden; and here, on this broad lonely ocean twelve thousand miles from his home, the poor lad laughed as he had laughed in the years gone by—laughed and tried to splash the salt

water about as he had done in sport, for now indeed he had become altogether oblivious of things that belonged to the present. Then it was he recollected every day of his youth. How pleasant it had been, he felt now, and he laughed, for it was as if the joy of the past returned to him. It is this gradual losing of consciousness of the present that makes drowning the most peaceful of deaths.

Then, as he became weaker and weaker, new fancies seized upon him. He thought he was once again a little boy lying upon his bed, and just recovering from the fever that he had had when very young. His mother was sitting by his side reading, as she had read to him then, out of the book he loved best — The Pilgrim's Progress. She was reading of the pilgrim's passing through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. All the words returned to him—the words and

the pictures of the old book, for he saw staring at him, through the darkness, the horrible faces of the goblins and hideous demons that clutched at him, yelling and laughing in his ear. But through all their din there came to him the sweet low voice that had ever soothed him—the voice of his mother, saying the words, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

And he was comforted.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT a strange gulf is that of unconsciousness, and how unsearchable are its depths! Who that has ever been plunged into this gulf can tell us anything of how it was crossed? It is a great blank of death in the midst of life, and none has returned from that death with any capability of recounting to us its mysteries.

Charlie Barton had crossed the gulf: he opened his eyes and found himself in his own cabin aboard the *Jessica*. It seemed to him that he had awakened from a confused dream—a dream of many things, in which nothing could be distinctly remembered. He could not recall falling into the sleep that had been full of such confusion, nor could he bring to mind any of the events

that had led up to it. It was a long, perplexing task, this endeavour to bridge over the gulf of unconsciousness. He went on puzzling his poor brains to connect the past with the present, but without success, until suddenly he raised one hand, that seemed very heavy, and saw within his fingers the link which he had so long sought in vain; for he found, still clutched in his grasp, a shred of a blue jersey. In an instant all that had happened flashed across his mind, and, strange to say, the first thought that occurred to him took the form of the question—"Did I let him go?"

He looked at the piece of the jersey attentively for a long time, puzzling over an answer, but not accomplishing one, when the door of his cabin was opened, and some one seemed to enter, though he could not look up to see who it was. Then the voice of Phil Carter was heard, saying, in a

melancholy tone, "Ah, poor Charlie, poor Charlie! to think that he should have come to an end in this way."

Charlie could not avoid smiling gently in the dusk of the cabin, for it was evening. Phil, however, lit the small lamp, and bent over him, looking into his face closely. Charlie shut his eyes at once, and again Phil sighed, murmuring, "Poor old fellow!" This was too much for the occupant of the bunk, who sent Phil back with the start he received when the supposed drowned man opened one of his eyes and quietly winked with it.

"What—what was that?" Phil muttered, half fearfully. "Was it a spasm, I wonder?"

Once again he went forward gently, and looked into the face of his friend. This time there was no mistake about it. There was a wink, and with the other eye.

"By George! it can't surely be possible! Are you alive again, Charlie, old fellow?"

Charlie smiled, saying in a very weak voice, "Why shouldn't I be alive?"

It was probably only the limited space of the chief officer's cabin that prevented Phil from executing, in its entirety, the wild Indian dance that he commenced upon hearing the voice come from the apparently inanimate body.

"Hurrah!" he cried, "I'm a doctor in myself. I knew you would recover, though they all laughed at me. I knew you weren't such a muff as to drown yourself in that way. Oh, Charlie, old man, I can't tell you how I feel. I feel as if—as if—oh, hang it all, give me your hand."

The grasp and the shaking he gave the hand would have been enough to bring back life to a man even if he were much further departed from it than Charlie.

"And how do you feel now, my boy?—oh, I forgot, you mustn't speak a single word until you are on your feet."

"Only this," said Charlie, faintly: "Did I let go my hold of him?"

"No, confound you," replied Phil, "you did not let go. You held on like a fool, and almost let him drown you."

"And he was not drowned?"

"He? By George, he was not unconscious for more than an hour, and he was on duty as well as ever last night."

"Why, surely it was in the evening he fell overboard?"

"Yes, but not the evening of yesterday. It was the day before."

"Then I have been unconscious two days?" said Charlie.

"Don't talk any more, my boy," said Phil, with the authority of a medical man in the tone of his voice.

"All right," Charlie replied, "only this: How did this come here?" And he held up the piece of the jersey. "If I held on, did the jersey give way, or how?"

"It didn't give way. The simple facts are these: when we came in the boat up to you both, we tried to lift you aboard separately, but you seemed so fond of your companion you refused to let your hand unclose from his jersey, so I had to cut the piece away with my knife, and allow you to hold on to the piece."

"Tell me all that happened," cried Charlie, eagerly.

"Not on any account," replied the other, gravely. "You shall hear all when you are yourself again. Ah, here comes Patsy with something that will set you up."

"God save all here, includin' the corp'," said the Irishman, entering the cabin with a smoking tumbler of something.

"There's no corpse, or 'corp,' as you call it, here," said Phil.

"Faith, no more there is. It's well and hearty the brave boy looks this day. Give us yer hand, sir; it's proud I am of meself havin' brought ye to. This is another proof of the whishkey cure. I knew that sort of thratement was the thing for you. It's tumbler afther tumbler ye've had iver since the accident, and here's another."

"Get out of this and stop your speech-making," said Phil. "You talk of bringing Mr. Barton to life, and all the time you are doing your best to prevent the possibility of his being cured, by making him excited. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Charlie could see that there was a good deal of professional jealousy between the two, each of whom was anxious to claim the honour of having restored him to life.

He thought it better not to interfere, so the steward, after a single growl, left the cabin.

"Now," said Phil, "you must try and sleep. I have to hasten aft with the news of your recovery."

"To Stephens?"

"No, to Miss Longwood and her father. I promised them that I would do so."

It was too dark for Phil Carter to see how Charlie's face was burning with the mention of the name of Miss Longwood. To hear that she was not altogether indifferent as to his recovery was a great happiness to him, and so soon as he was alone in his cabin he sent up a prayer of thankfulness for his preservation, and of hope that he might be enabled to shield her, who was more to him than life, from the danger which he alone knew threatened her. Then he fell into the quiet sleep that

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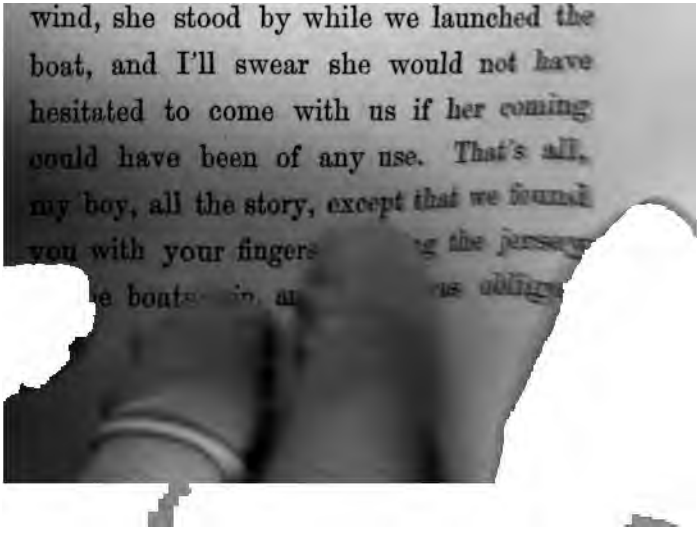
had gone over the side, and Stephens had seen you take your leap, but, in an instant, he shouted to keep the vessel on her course. The man at the wheel did not know what to do, for the skipper yelled out his former order as wildly as before, and the men at the halyards paused. And in the pause of a few seconds, who should be seen on the deck but Miss Longwood; she seemed to take in the state of things at a single glance, for she stood up there and repeated your orders in her clear, sweet voice, and Stephens slunk like a hound into his cabin. Then, when the ship was brought up to the


wind, she stood by while we launched the boat, and I'll swear she would not have hesitated to come with us if her coming could have been of any use. That's all, my boy, all the story, except that we found you with your fingers [illegible] the jersey [illegible] e boat [illegible] in, a [illegible] us oblig[illegible]

Phil had wished for him, and did not awaken until the morning.

When Phil came to him with a large bowl of gruel, about breakfast-time, he again begged to be told how he had been rescued from the water, and Phil, who was really burning to give him a full account, said that, as he had behaved so well in falling asleep, he should hear all.

"But there is not, indeed, much to tell," he said. "You remember giving the order to brace aback the yards and put down the helm, to bring the ship to?"

"I remember so far?"

"Well, before you could see that the order was executed you were in the water in our wake. I ran to the long-boat, to haul the davits over the side, and I heard the skipper repeat your orders, but before the helm had been put down Stephens appeared. There was a cry that it was the boatswain who

had gone over the side, and Stephens had seen you take your leap, but, in an instant, he shouted to keep the vessel on her course. The man at the wheel did not know what to do, for the skipper yelled out his former order as wildly as before, and the men at the halyards paused. And in the pause of a few seconds, who should be seen on the deck but Miss Longwood; she seemed to take in the state of things at a single glance, for she stood up there and repeated your orders in her clear, sweet voice, and Stephens slunk like a hound into his cabin. Then, when the ship was brought up to the wind, she stood by while we launched the boat, and I'll swear she would not have hesitated to come with us if her coming could have been of any use. That's all, my boy, all the story, except that we found you with your fingers clutching the jersey of the boatswain, and that I was obliged

to cut off the piece before you could be brought aboard. Stephens has never appeared on deck since his orders were countermanded by the young lady, but she has been here every hour since you were picked up, to make enquiries about you; and when I told her last evening that you were all right she shook me by the hand, and it was not so dark but that I could see tears in her eyes as she said, in a whisper, 'Thank God.' That's the end of the story."

"Yes," said Charlie, devoutly, "the end of all is 'Thank God.'"

The united care of Phil Carter and Patsy, the steward, soon made Charlie himself again, and by the evening of the second day after he had heard the story of how he was picked up, he was able to resume duty on the deck.

He was standing looking into the water,

now still and beautiful, where it had been so lately tossing and eager for his destruction, when he heard a step—a light footfall, behind him. He turned and saw Miss Longwood standing there in the soft twilight, looking as lovely as the angel of a dream. She held out her hand to him, saying, in her soft voice, "How glad I am —ah, I cannot tell you how glad I am that you were saved. It would have been too dreadful for you to have been lost in that way."

He raised her hand to his lips before he said, "It is to you, Miss Longwood, that my safety is due. If you had not faced that man as you did when he had ordered the ship to be kept on her course, we would not have had a chance."

"How could I stand here and see you perish?" she said. "I have already treated you with the basest injustice and in-

gratitude, but you have forgiven me, I know."

"Forgiven you!" he repeated. "Oh, Miss Longwood, there was no thought but of forgiveness in my heart towards you."

"I knew it, I knew it," she said, and passed away without another word.

The young man stood there until the evening had almost darkened into night. He was thinking of his position, and also of Miss Longwood's, aboard the ship. He was asking himself what he was saved for; was it to be the protector of this girl who was so surrounded by danger, and, if so, how could he best be her protector?

While he was thus thinking he saw a man come to pick up a line that was lying near him. The man did not observe him, but he could see from his figure that it was the boatswain, so he took a step from the side as the man stooped.

"Well, boatswain," he said, cheerily, "how do you feel now? Nothing the worse for your cold bath, eh?"

The boatswain started, but never raised his eyes to Charlie's face. He muttered something that was almost inaudible and hurried away.

Charlie was rather surprised at this, for he thought that the boatswain was of such a nature as would not be affected by such a trifle as having his life saved, and the confusion he had manifested showed clearly that he felt the burden of his debt to be greater than he could bear. But Charlie was destined to learn another phase of the boatswain's nature.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was midnight upon that great, silent ocean, through which the good ship *Jessica*, with all sail set, was softly moving on her way, urged by the gentlest of breezes from the south. Everything aboard the ship was silent, for the second mate was on watch far aft, and the sailors nominally on the deck watch were asleep. The chief officer was in his cabin; he felt hot and restless, and he was lying awake with his thoughts when he heard the handle of his door give a little creak. He started up in his bunk, and decided in an instant that his sextant was the best weapon he could employ if attacked at close quarters. Cautiously and slowly the door opened, but

before any figure appeared, a voice asked in a whisper, "Are you awake, sir?" It was the boatswain's voice, Charlie knew, and he replied to it in the same tone, that was not louder than a whisper.

"Yes, I'm awake."

"I have got something to say to you, sir," said the other voice—"a matter of life and death, and I want to meet with you alone."

"We are alone here," said Charlie; "can you not tell me all here?"

"It couldn't be done, sir. For God's sake come to the mainmast with me now that the fit is on me. It may soon pass, and then it will be too late."

"I will meet you in five minutes by the mainmast," said Charlie, surprised at the eagerness of the man's speech. Then the door of the cabin closed and he was left alone.

It did not take him long to pull on some clothes and hasten out to where he had appointed to meet the man. He found the boatswain in the shadow of the mast, where he was effectually concealed.

"Now, my man, what have you to tell me that needs such secresy?" he asked.

"I have plenty, sir," replied the man. "And it needs us to be secret, for if it was known that we were talking together here, there is not a man of the crew that would hesitate about throwing us overboard."

"Well, we have been overboard together before now, boatswain," remarked Charlie, who thought it would be no harm to begin this confidential chat by reminding the man of his debt.

"We were, sir, and we would be yet if that accursed ruffian had his will. Did you hear that he ordered the ship to be

kept on her course after I had gone over the side?"

"I did, indeed; it was Miss Longwood who saved us."

"It was, sir; and it's to reward her, and to be revenged on him, that I am here now. Do you know who he is, sir?"

"Mr. Stephens? No."

"I do though. We worked together in the same gang for three years."

"The same gang?"

"Yes. The man that calls himself Stephens is better known in the world by the name of Gleeson."

"What, Gleeson, the man who was convicted of forgery?"

"The same, sir."

"But he was sentenced to transportation for ten years."

"So he was, and he served five of his years, and then he got his ticket. I was

put down for five years at the same time, but that was only for making away with the cargo of a ship I was in. We served together at the station, and when he got his ticket, I got my discharge. We parted then, and I have been a good bit round the world since, but though I heard now and again of my old pal's prosecution of the forging business, I never met him until the week before this vessel set sail. Then I came across him, dressed like a regular swell, in the street at Melbourne. I had arrived a fortnight before in this ship from Rangoon. He would have passed me by, for he was in no dress for meeting a common sailor on equal terms, but a sudden thought seemed to strike him when he saw me. He spoke to me then, and asked me to meet him in the evening. We did meet, and he questioned me about the vessel I was in. I told him that she had

come from England to Rangoon, and on to Melbourne, where she was to stay until the owner, Mr. Stephens, turned up, which would probably be in ten days. What was the skipper like, he asked me; and I said he was a man ready to do anything for a glass of rum. Was Mr. Stephens known in Melbourne, he enquired, and I told him 'No.' 'Are you ready to help me in a plan that will make our fortunes?' he said. And I assured him I was ready for anything. He then told me he had been on the look out for such a chance as this for some days. He said he knew of a gentleman who was going to ship a quantity of bullion to England, and take a passage himself with the shipment if he could get a craft to suit him. 'Now,' he said, 'why shouldn't I be this absent Mr. Stephens, and order the *Jessica* to sea before he turns up?' I saw what he was about, and

I promised to sound the skipper on the subject. Of course, I knew that Butcher would agree to be in the plot if he was only promised as much as he could drink during the voyage, and a share of the profits at the end. That's how he came in for the ship, sir, though how he caught the gentleman with the gold I don't know."

"Good heavens," cried Charlie. "The whole thing seems utterly improbable. How could he impose upon the agents?"

"That was where his old business stood him in good service. He got Butcher to lend him some of the ship's papers that were in the hand-writing of the real Stephens. Gleeson then forged a letter to Butcher for him to show the agents, with Stephens's signature, saying that he had arrived, and would visit the ship the next day. But this even did not satisfy him, for he forged

other documents in the same writing, to be presented to the agents."

"And nothing was suspected?"

"So far from there being any suspicion, when he called upon the agents he received an invitation to dinner with the chief. Gleeson had been at Rangoon once, and so he was able to talk about the place."

"And what was the plot with regard to the gold that should be shipped?" asked Charlie, so soon as he had in a measure recovered from his astonishment at the story he was told.

"This was it, sir; we were to ship the gold and the passenger, but when we should get out a few thousand miles, it was thought that the passenger would become so sick he would not recover; or if not—well, never mind. He was not to see land at any rate; and then we were to

alter the course of the vessel for some port in America, where we could sell her and share the profits."

Charlie listened while the boatswain revealed this diabolical plot for the destruction of all that he loved. What he heard produced a terrible impression upon him. With a great effort he controlled himself, however, and motioned to the boatswain to proceed.

"There's nothing more to tell, sir," said the man. "I employed the crew—true scoundrels to a man. But it was Gleeson who engaged you and the second mate. He came to me chuckling that he had got soft ones in you both, and I thought he was right until the day before yesterday. That's all that you don't know, except that in the course of the day before we sailed a letter came to Butcher from the real Stephens, saying that he would be in

Melbourne the next morning. We had a narrow shave for it, you see; that police tug had certainly found out how things stood, and it would have been awkward for us if it had boarded us."

Charlie could hardly realize all he had just heard. The plot seemed too subtle to have been woven by a man; surely it was the invention of a fiend.

"And you," he said, "you would have murdered the old man and have left his daughter to worse than death?"

"Hush, sir; don't be so loud; if we were seen together, there is not a man of the crew that would hesitate throwing us both overboard. Yes, we were all to share in the plunder, and only a few nights ago Gleeson and I were talking of ridding ourselves of the skipper, because he was getting tender about the lady."

"Great heavens! then we are in as

great a danger as ever," said Charlie. "What are we against them all? I knew that you and Stephens and the skipper were against us in a plot, but I did not think it possible that all aboard could be in it also."

"You knew that Stephens and I were?"

"Yes, I overheard you the other night."

"And yet you were ready to throw away your life to save me?" said the boatswain, in a puzzled way. He could not understand such a contradiction.

"I did not know at first who it was I was trying to save," said Charlie. "Never mind. Tell me what course we are to pursue that we may rescue those who were to be your victims?"

"We can do nothing as yet, sir; we must only keep on in our usual way until the right moment comes. Don't ever be seen speaking to me, lest suspicion should

be aroused. We have already been too long together to-night. I swear to you that I will be true now, even though I should die for it. I have been a bad man —I am a bad man yet, I know, but you may believe me in this matter. Thank God it is off my mind now."

Charlie turned to him, and with a sudden impulse, he held out his hand.

"You have done a terrible wrong to those who never offended you," he said. "But I believe in my heart you intend to make all the reparation in your power. There, I will trust you."

The man clutched his hand eagerly, and held it for an instant, saying in a whisper, "I swear under heaven this night never to be anything but true to you, in thought, word, and action. If I don't may all the torments of ——"

"That will do," said Charlie, interrupting

him. "I will believe you. We must save Mr. Longwood and his daughter from the power of this villain."

He walked back to his cabin noiselessly, and closed the door. He sat down on the chest in the darkness and tried to think over all that he had heard. It was impossible for him to collect his thoughts. They followed each other in such tumultuous course that nothing remained definite in his mind—all was confusion, worse than the confusion of a dream. He could not do anything but whisper, "I will save her, I will save her." That was the sole result of his bewildered reflections upon his situation. He repeated the words in the darkness, as though they possessed of themselves some magic power of comfort. And so perhaps they did, for in half an hour he was comparatively calm, and able to comprehend something of the position he occupied. He was capable, in a measure, of

understanding what it was necessary for him to do in order to accomplish the purpose implied in those words, "I will save her."

And the conclusion he arrived at was that he should do nothing—absolutely nothing—as yet. He would be silent, but he would watch. He would let nothing escape his notice—he would not account anything too trivial to observe, and when his opportunity came—as come it should—he would act. He had at first felt overwhelming despair when he reflected upon the odds that were against him; but now he grew strong in his resolution to wait and watch. No great step could be taken by his enemy without some sign being given of it, and that sign Charlie swore should not escape his notice.

His thoughts went on and on until the sudden opening of his door made him start to his feet. It was Phil Carter, who had

come to awaken him for his watch on deck.

"What! are you up already?" said that young man. "You shouldn't have risen before I came to awaken you. It's very bad for you not to take your full amount of sleep."

Phil had within the past few days got into a style of talking like a doctor, shaking his head with the same show of wisdom. He would, on the strength of Charlie's recovery, have undertaken to prescribe on the most intricate case; setting a broken arm or a fractured leg would be child's play to him.

"You are right, no doubt, my boy," said Charlie. "But there are times, you know, when one cannot fall asleep."

"Of course," the medical adviser replied gravely; "but this is not the time for you to lie awake. You should have a great deal of rest just now, and not let anything lie on your mind."

"Exactly," said Charlie, with a smile, "not let anything lie on my mind."

And so saying, he went on deck and watched the stars about the eastern sky grow fainter and fainter as the delicate shafts of light shot upwards—heralds of the coming day. In a space of time that would have seemed marvellously short to dwellers in high latitudes, the morning twilight had passed, and the gold of the newly-risen sun was shed broadcast over the waters, and shaken over the sails of the ship.

Charlie watched the sun rise and wondered if it were possible that the recollection of what he had heard by the side of the main-mast in the night was the phantasmagoria of a fevered dream.

Alas! he felt that all was too real. The burden upon his mind was not to pass off in the light of the morning.

CHAPTER XV.

Mr. Stephens, as he must still be called, had not spoken to Charlie since his recovery. He had, in fact, been very little on deck, but on this day, Charlie, in the course of his careful observations, noticed him coming from the forward part of the ship, where he had not once been since the commencement of the voyage. This startled the young man, for he knew that Stephens must have been consulting with some of his accomplices among the crew.

This observation was by far the most important of all that he had yet made, for it told him that his enemy was getting tired of inaction, and was about to take a decisive

step. Charlie knew he had seen the interview between himself and Miss Longwood, and he felt that Stephens was becoming suspicious of the doubts of the young lady and her father. At dinner, too, Stephens was so agreeable to all, and so courteous, that Charlie guessed something was coming. He had not so utterly forgotten everything he had learned at school but that he could recollect the advice given to the citizens of Troy regarding the courtesy of their enemies, whose gifts even were to be looked on with suspicion: Charlie feared the graciousness of Stephens more than his open enmity.

But the young man had before dinner made another discovery. He had "taken the sun" with his sextant at noon, and, to his amazement, he found that the course of the vessel had been made more northerly during his illness; it was even already out of the usual track of the trade winds, and

fast approaching a region of variable winds and calms. He hastened to the captain to learn if it was by his consent the course had been changed.

The captain was sitting in his cabin with his usual companion, the rum-bottle, in front of him.

When the mate spoke to him he turned suddenly round.

"Look you here, young 'un," he said huskily but with an attempt at fierceness, "you've forgotten more than once that I'm the master of this vessel. You've been sailing her on your own course, you've been amusing yourself jumping overboard, and skylarking in a number of ways, but I'd have you know that I'm the master here; yes, sir, I'm master here," he brought his fist down with a bang on the table, and took advantage of its proximity to the rum-bottle to grasp it and carry it to his lips.

"But in a few days we shall be becalmed, sir," said Charlie.

Then the skipper burst into a chuckling laugh. "Becalmed? good! Oh, you're a bright youth to talk of such a thing in these seas. Have y'ever sailed in these seas before, my boy?"

"Never," said Charlie, "and I don't believe you ever did."

He was now thoroughly angry and almost reckless.

The skipper gave a start and glared at him savagely, but the young man returned his gaze, and then the skipper's fierce expression changed to a smile as he muttered,

"No more I have, no more I have; but I know all 'bout them; sit down and take a drink."

"No thank you, sir," said Charlie, "I'm not thirsty."

"That's no reason, my boy; take a

mouthful out of the bottle. I want to talk to you about the gov'nor. He's dead nuts on that girl, you know."

This was too much for Charlie. All his resolutions and prudence were cast to the winds as the blood rushed to his face. He took a step forward and clutched the skipper by the arm.

"Look here," he whispered. "I give you this warning. You may be my master, but if you ever in my presence make the least reference to that young lady in connection with the man you know to be a ruffian, I will show you that I am your master—I swear that to you."

Again the captain started, and once more his fierce expression passed into a smile.

"Give me your hand, my lad," he said. "You're the best fellow aboard the ship, though I'm 'fraid it'll go hard with you if you don't join us."

"What do you mean?" Charlie asked, quickly. "Join you?"

But the drunken mood of confidence had passed from the captain with his last words. He recollected himself, and a cunning smile came over his face.

"Join us? Did I say *join us?*" he asked. "Oh, I meant, of course, join us in this—this, my boy;" and he grasped the bottle. "Now, go away, young man, and see that the scuppers are clear before you try pumping such a man as me. Go on, now, go on!"

Charlie saw at once that he would gain nothing by remaining in the skipper's cabin, so he left it without another word.

He was, however, much alarmed regarding the course of the vessel, which, as he had found, was already outside the track of the Trade winds. He had heard of the terrible calms of the Pacific, and he thought

with dread of the possibility of the *Jessica* sailing into such a region.

He spoke to Stephens after dinner on the subject, and as he found himself able to address the man in the same manner as he had spoken to him before the boatswain's confession had been made, Charlie began to have confidence in his own powers of self-control.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said; "but do you know that the ship is not on the right course, if you mean to double the Horn? She is out of the Trades and fast approaching the Line; and you will see on Imray's chart that for twenty degrees south there is a region of variable winds and calms. I spoke to the captain, but he does not seem to think it necessary to alter the course."

Stephens looked at the young man, with a sneer upon his lips.

"Mr. Brown, as you call yourself," he

said, "you have had your way too long aboard my vessel, let me tell you. It's time that your course also was changed, let me tell you as well. You forget that you are but mate—not master. Don't come to me with your stories. I'm neither going to be bullied into making you captain, nor into telling you the destination of the ship. If I hear any more talk from you I'll let you know that the ship is not so badly found but that there's a pair of irons aboard, that's all."

The young man's blood boiled with rage, then it cooled till his face was deadly pale. He turned away from the man without a reply, and as he walked to his cabin he felt once more that he was becoming strong in self-control; he was not so hopeless of his own victory, though with such tremendous odds against him. He had not, however, sufficient confidence in the self-restraint of

his friend, Phil Carter, to allow of his telling that young man all the boatswain had confided to him. Phil was inclined to be impetuous, and so Charlie thought it better to let the story stand over until the moment when Phil's impetuousness might be a virtue.

Charlie walked away from Stephens without a word, and that gentleman began to imagine that, after all, the chief mate was not the man of spirit he had seemed. But Charlie had not gone past the main-mast when he found the boatswain beside him.

"Do you think that new mizzen-topmast properly sent up, sir?" asked the boatswain, pointing aloft.

Charlie looked up. "I see nothing the matter with it," he answered.

"Do you not, sir," said the man. "Well, if you look a while longer you may; or, in

any case, if anyone should see us looking at it they will not fancy we are talking about something else."

Charlie at once understood the clever device of the man. He looked up and pointed out an imaginary something on the topmast, saying, "You have something to tell me, boatswain; all right, I'll listen."

"I have, sir;" and the boatswain made signs of apparent explanation of the imaginary something on the mast. "The gov'nor has been forward sounding me, to see if I am still true to him."

"And you made him believe ——"

"That I was truer than ever to him and to our old plans," said the man. "I promise you he has confidence in me. I didn't tell him that I heard how he countermanded the order to put the ship about when I had gone overboard and you after me, infernal scoundrel that he is! Let me once get a

chance of having him in the water, and if he doesn't make a nice meal for a shark may I never sail on another voyage."

"Then you think he is still holding to his old plans?"

"I should think he is; only I fancy he has thrown over the new ideas he may have had about the young lady. You know it was my impression that he made up his mind after he came aboard the ship to cheat us, that he had bound to his cause by a promise of share and share alike, by getting the young lady to marry him. If he did that he would have all to himself, and could laugh at us. But he has thrown over all idea of such an arrangement."

"He may well do so," said Charlie. "That young lady believes him to be what he is."

"I hope she may not let him know that," said the boatswain. "If she did

I'm afraid it would be the worse for herself."

"I think everything is about as bad as can be for her," said Charlie, his heart sinking as he reflected upon her situation.

"Don't be downhearted, sir," the boatswain said, encouragingly. "We'll be too many for him yet. The scoundrel would have drowned me if he could; I've still that score to settle with him."

Charlie saw that the desire for revenge on the part of the boatswain was exercising quite as strong an influence in determining his course of action as gratitude for his preservation.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE mate turned into his cabin at eight bells (midnight), and at that hour a light breeze from the south was blowing, but when he came on deck again at four o'clock, what a change had come over everything! There was a death-like stillness over all—a stillness that only seemed more still by the sound of the playing of the ripples against the side of the vessel, the idle flapping of the sails against the mast, the strange creaking of the rudder, and every now and again the flipping of a dozen flying fish from the water, and their light splash at returning to the surface. At last the region of calms had been reached.

Beside the wheel the helmsman lay on

the deck asleep. Charlie awoke him and demanded angrily what he meant by neglecting his post. The man sat up and looked at him drowsily.

"Yes, I was asleep, no doubt," he said. "And it's the best thing for you and everybody aboard this ship to do for the next month. You may get the sails taken off to save them rotting, for there'll be no use for them except as awnings."

"Do you mean to say that the calm will last?" asked Charlie.

"It's just as sure to last as those shining stars," laughed the man, pointing upwards with his thumb. "I've sailed in these seas for a good spell of years, and I oughter know summat about their ways. I never did see a ship go so far to the north'ard without bein' caught in a calm before this."

"I've never sailed here until now,"

said Charlie, wishing to be friendly with the sailor, "but I heard of this region and pointed it out on the chart to the skipper. He wouldn't listen to me, however, and this is the consequence. How long have you known these calms to last, my man?"

"Well, sir, it's a short one that's over in a month," said the man; "but it's my notion dozens of ships that get caught rot to pieces, with their crews feeding on each other, before they get free by a breeze of wind."

Charlie walked away sick at heart, leaving the steersman to yawn and turn over on the other side. This last blow of ill-luck was the hardest the young man had received. Surely, he thought, everything was so much against him it was useless for him to strive any longer with Fate.

It had been very pleasant for him to feel, as he had previously, that he was an

instrument ordained and provided by this power, which he found convenient to term Fate, for the preservation of that girl and her father; and it had not been disagreeable for him to reflect at times on the possibility of this power called Fate influencing Miss Longwood's feelings towards her protector; so he had thought himself quite in a position to contend with adverse circumstances on her behalf. But now Charlie had a sickening sense of failure: he had grappled with Fate, but Fate had got the best of the conflict.

And a few hours afterwards the stars had died out, and the rays of the sun were shed along the waters, that were now a perfectly still plane of shining glass. The sails were dazzling in their whiteness as they hung dead against the masts, not even flapping now. The sky was darkly blue, and it seemed but a gigantic hollow re-

flector of the sun's rays. No description of the terrible oppression of such a tropic calm can compare with those few lines of "The Ancient Mariner," which everybody knows :—

> "Day after day, day after day,
> We stuck ; nor breath, nor motion ;
> As idle as a painted ship
> Upon a painted ocean."

Charlie had often heard the lines, and they had often come back to him when vessels he had sailed in had been becalmed for a few days at a time, but never, before now, did he feel their awful meaning. The *Jessica* was as dead as a ship on canvas, and the giant albatross that was suspended in the air over the stern seemed to be a part of the picture. Everything looked asleep from sea to heaven.

Stephens came on deck soon after sunrise, and gave a perceptible start as the

reality of the calm was forced upon him. He looked aloft, and then all around the horizon, and he did not seem to become more at ease through this survey. Charlie could see him clench his teeth in rage, and then go towards the captain's cabin. In a few minutes afterwards the worthy skipper appeared by his side in a half-dressed, and, probably, a quarter-sober, condition. He looked about him also, and then slapped Stephens on the shoulder, saying something with a laugh. In an instant Stephens had caught him by the throat and had thrown him heavily to the deck, with an oath.

The skipper appeared rather astonished at this treatment, but in a second he was on his feet and had made a rush for a belaying-pin. Charlie saw his action, and he caught hold of the bulwarks to prevent himself from going between the men. He was really becoming more wicked every day.

Then he saw the skipper secure the heavy piece of teak and turn on Stephens: but what was that sudden flash of steel? that sudden click, click? Stephens was pointing a cocked revolver at him. Charlie sprang forward, but, at the same instant, both belaying-pin and revolver were lowered, for there, at the entrance to the companion, stood Miss Longwood, pale and startled. Even these fierce, brutal men, who, before then, had thought nothing of murder, dropped their weapons at the sight of that girl.

The captain looked surly for an instant, then he threw the belaying-pin overboard and turned away, muttering. Stephens quietly put his revolver into his pocket—he seemed to have one made for it—and advanced, smiling, to Miss Longwood.

"I trust you are not frightened, Miss Longwood," he said blandly. "I assure

you I had no idea you were near, or I should not have pulled out the revolver, unloaded though it is. I merely did it to intimidate that half-tipsy brute. Allow me to conduct you down again."

"No, thank you," said the lady, drawing back coldly. "I am going on deck before breakfast."

She bowed and went past him without even looking at him, and Charlie could see his fists clench and his eyes flash, as he felt the force of her scorn. It seemed to the young man as if he had never loved her until that instant, and now he realised how glorious it would be to die for her.

The skipper stood as steadily as he could on the deck as the lady walked past him. He followed her with his eyes, and Charlie could hear him mutter, "Hang me if I don't be on her side from to-day! She's

too good to be in the power of that convict scoundrel; the gold may go where it likes."

Charlie knew from this instant that he had an ally in his captain; but what an ally was this constantly intoxicated man, whose ignorance had brought the ship and her company into this terrible calm! Surely he would be as well without such a man on his side.

When the captain had also left the deck Miss Longwood went up to Charlie. Her face was white with terror as she cried, "For heaven's sake, tell me what is the matter—what is the meaning of this?"

"It means, Miss Longwood, that a crisis is coming," he replied.

"A crisis?"

"Yes; a few days will settle everything."

"I don't understand you."

"You could not, even if I were to tell you all I know. You could never be brought to understand what ruffians men can be. Will you be good enough to ask your father to come into my cabin the first chance he has of doing so without being noticed, and I will join him there? I wish to speak to him particularly."

"Tell me," the girl whispered, eagerly; "are you apprehensive of any danger to my father?"

"I cannot tell you anything, Miss Longwood," he answered. "I dare not alarm you by telling you what, after all, may only be my foolish suspicions."

"Foolish suspicions!" she repeated, looking at him for a few moments; "oh, Mr. Brown, I see by the way you speak that you cannot bring yourself to believe that your suspicions are foolish."

The young man turned away from her

without answering. But she was not to be put off in this way.

"Listen to me, Mr. Brown," she said, quietly and earnestly; "do not think that I am a child, who will faint or scream at a terrible story. I am a woman, and I can hear unmoved all you have to tell me. Now tell me all your suspicions, I entreat of you. Is it not better that I should know everything than that I should imagine the very worst, as I do now?"

Charlie answered by a sudden impulse, "I will tell you all, Miss Longwood, and you may draw your own conclusion."

In a very few words he related to her the most of what had been confessed to him by the boatswain, keeping back, of course, the reference the boatswain had made to herself; he had not the heart to tell her that. He merely indicated that the robbery of her father's wealth was the

object of the plot of Stephens and his gang.

He was surprised at the calm way in which she heard all that he had to say. When he detailed the manner of Stephens' coming into possession of the ship, a look of astonishment passed over her face, her breath came quickly, and at last she clasped her hands over her heart to still its beating, as the whole of the horrible plot was made clear to her. When Charlie had ended, she continued looking blankly into his face, as if bewildered with what she had heard. He was right: she could not understand how men could contain in their nature such a depth of villainy! In a few minutes she began to smile, as some people do on becoming acquainted with a calamity the full extent of which overwhelms their powers of comprehension. But Charlie was so stupid as to misinterpret this smile of hers.

"You think my story is too wild to be believed," he said. "Ah, I knew you would do so. I knew you could not understand how men might become more fiendish than demons."

Then she started. "Yes, yes, I do understand—I try to understand. But how can anything so horrible be suffered to happen? Can men be such fiends? How have we injured them? My father—oh, to think of his being in such danger! I will go to those men and beseech of them to spare him—to spare my father. Surely they must have some feeling — some mercy."

"Hush, for heaven's sake," said Charlie; "hush, or all will be lost. If it should be seen that you suspect anything, we should have no chance of escape. As it is now, there is no immediate danger, and we will yet be able to foil those demons.

Now go to your own cabin, I beseech you, and tell Mr. Longwood to come to mine as soon after breakfast as possible."

The girl mechanically obeyed, and descended the companion, leaving him alone on the deck beneath the idle sails, that the sun was glittering upon with such fierceness.

When breakfast was over he saw Mr. Longwood come on deck, and after glancing about to be sure that no one was observing, go into his, Charlie's, cabin. In a short time the young man, also looking around, followed him, and both stood face to face.

"What is this my daughter tells me, Mr. Brown?" said Mr. Longwood in a whisper. "Have we really been entrapped by an unscrupulous scoundrel?"

"There is no doubt of it, sir," the young man replied, in an equally low voice.

"But there is yet no cause for apprehension. No step can be taken without my noticing it; and, as one of the former leaders of the conspiracy is now on our side, there is no reason to fear. Is it known to anyone but Stephens where you have your gold placed, sir?"

Then it was that Mr. Longwood smiled — not as his daughter had, but with a little gleam of triumph in his expression.

"One word, my lad," he whispered, laying his hand on the young man's arm; "*there's not a pound weight of gold of mine aboard this ship.*"

Charlie started. "Then I have been deceived by the boatswain, when I believed him to be telling me the truth," he said. "He told me he saw the boxes containing it brought aboard—nay, you yourself told me it was in the cabin."

"No," said Mr. Longwood. "I only said that the nine boxes were there. So they are, and the boatswain saw them shipped, and was given to understand that they contained gold; but I will tell you a secret now. There was nothing more valuable than leaden bullets inside the boxes. I certainly did intend shipping my gold in the same vessel I was returning by. But only two days before I came aboard I met with an old friend of mine, who pointed out the folly of doing such a thing, and dissuaded me from it. 'Suppose anything should happen to the ship,' said my friend, 'all your money will be lost.' So I took his advice, and forwarded it to England by the mail steamer. Lest, however, I should give the man whom I believed to be the owner of this vessel reason to fancy, because I had changed my mind, that I suspected his good faith, I had the boxes filled

with lead, and so brought on board to pass for the gold, and make him believe I was carrying out my original design."

The first thought that struck Charlie after hearing Mr. Longwood's communication was, that if the friend who had given the advice about the gold had but extended his counsel to include Mr. Longwood and his daughter in the list of valuables not to be risked aboard the *Jessica*, it would have been well. But it flashed across his mind that perhaps this friend had in his phrase, "if anything should happen," referred to the possibility of something happening to Mr. Longwood himself, who had been in such a weak state; if this was the case, then the consistency of the advice was apparent.

In spite of the undiminished gravity of their situation, Charlie could not avoid indulging in a laugh as he thought of how

the men would look into each other's faces when they should discover that they had been cheated of their plunder.

"I am glad they will be so cheated, sir," he said; "but it would not be a very great consolation to you to reflect on this if they carried out their devilish plans."

"For myself, I could defy them to do their worst," said Mr. Longwood; "but when I think of my daughter exposed to the chances of being in the power of——" He turned away and sat down upon the chest, covering his face with his hands.

Charlie was touched to the soul with the picture of the old man's grief. Had Winifred Longwood been a girl quite unknown to him, the piteous attitude of the father would have roused him to be her champion; but being, as she was, dearer to him than life, he felt equal to anything for her sake. He laid his hand on Mr. Long-

wood's shoulder, saying, "Do not give way, sir; do not fear for her, she shall be safe. There is a God above us still."

Mr. Longwood started up.

"She shall be safe," he cried; "she shall, for I will kill her with this hand before I see her fall into the power of those hell-hounds. Oh, help me, help her, my lad! You are not one to whom I dare offer a reward, or what thousands I should promise you."

Charlie smiled. "I shall have a reward, sir, beyond what is in your power to offer me, if I succeed. But, for heaven's sake, let us be careful not to betray ourselves. It will not do for us to allow either Stephens or anyone else to fancy that we suspect them."

"How shall we be able to avoid it?" said Mr. Longwood. "I feel as if I could not resist, even for a moment, seizing that

ruffian by the throat. Old as I am, I am certain that I should not release him before one of us was dead."

He was speaking with hands locked together in excitement, and the young man was convinced that, indeed, Stephens would not have much chance if he once fell into those hands.

"Pray calm yourself, my dear sir," Charlie said. "Do not doubt that the time will come when we shall see them at our feet. We shall conquer—we must conquer."

"God bless you, my boy, for those words," said Mr. Longwood. "We shall conquer, if there is a heaven above us."

"I am watching every motion that is made aboard the ship," said Charlie, "so that you may depend nothing will escape me, and I will let you know the first suspicious occurrence that I perceive. The

boatswain being on our side is an immense point in our favour."

"We must find opportunities of meeting unobserved, and then you can tell me all that is happening," said Mr. Longwood; and, with a warm pressure of the hand, they parted, Charlie going out first, and when he was certain that the cabin was unobserved, returning and signaling Mr. Longwood to leave. In a few minutes afterwards the young man was alone upon the stern of the ship.

END OF VOL. I.

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